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Gorst, Harold E.

The proofs of Christ's deity





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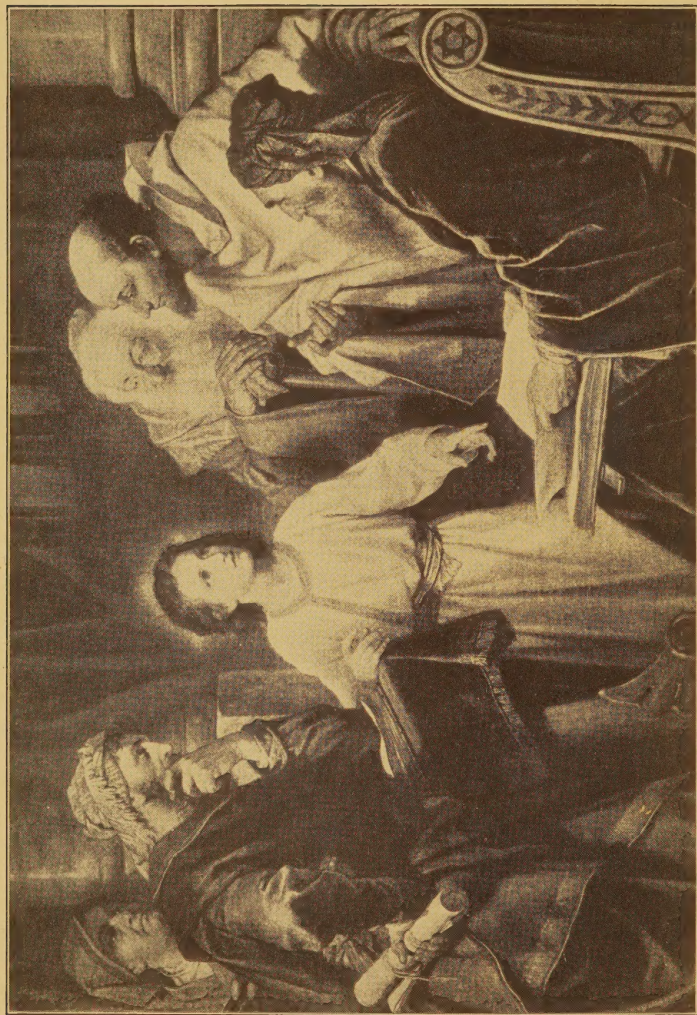
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CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

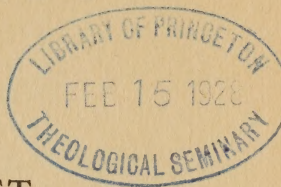
*Frontispiece*]

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# THE PROOFS OF CHRIST'S DEITY

BY

HAROLD E. ✓ GORST



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TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
MY MOTHER

## PREFATORY NOTE

THERE is so much scepticism to-day, even in the churches, that this little volume, whatever its shortcomings, may serve as a useful reminder to professing Christians that, however deeply rooted one's faith may be, belief in the deity of Jesus Christ rests upon the secure foundations of evidence such as would have been accepted by any Court of Justice.

As important inferences are drawn from words recorded in the four Gospels, the quotations throughout the book have been taken from the Revised Version of the New Testament. Pronouns referring to the Deity have been quoted as they appear in Scripture without the capital letter.

H. E. G.



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# THE PROOFS OF CHRIST'S DEITY

## CHAPTER I

"I must be about my Father's business."

THE proofs of the deity of Jesus Christ lie within the four Gospels. One need look no further for them. Nor is there any half-way of belief for those who accept the veracity and honest purpose of the Evangelists. Is it possible to doubt either? The greatest scholars admit, both on historical and literary grounds, that these four versions of the Gospel of Christ bear upon their face the stamp of truth. The figure of our Lord is too great, too completely unexpected by those who lived in His time, to have been capable of invention even by a Shakespeare. The four Evangelists, by common consent, possessed no such literary qualifications as the greatest of all poets. If they were inspired by the truth alone; if they wrote down events from first-hand information, or as they had themselves witnessed them; if they reproduced their Master's flawless sayings with accuracy—then it is impossible to reject the assumption that Jesus Christ was what He stated Himself to be: the Son of God, a divine Being

incarnated for the express purpose of saving mankind on this earth.

If the proof of this assumption rested upon the miraculous nature of the events which characterized the birth of our Lord, there would be ground for honest scepticism. The writers of the two Gospels which contain the story did not themselves witness these events. They could only have obtained their knowledge of them upon hearsay. But it would be absurd to call them legendary. The Evangelists were the contemporaries of Jesus. They were surrounded by people, older in years, who were living at the time of the nativity of our Lord and could furnish first-hand information about happenings which must, inevitably, have made a profound impression upon all who came within their orbit. But any difficulty in believing this portion of the Gospel's narrative, which is derived from the statements of St. Matthew and St. Luke, must surely disappear when the later proofs of Christ's divine origin are accepted. Once granted that the Son of God was incarnated on earth, remarkable and even supernatural events would be expected to accompany so stupendous and unique an occurrence. Isolated from all other evidence, the miraculous birth might be honestly doubted; but it fits accurately and logically into the overwhelming mass of later revelations.

What is the story told in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke?

It is recorded by St. Luke that an angel was sent from God to Nazareth to a virgin named Mary,

who was betrothed to Joseph, a descendant of the house of David. The angel informed her that she had found favour with God, and that she would bring forth a son who was to be called Jesus. When Mary asked how this could be, as she was only a betrothed maiden, the angel replied : " The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee : wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." Shortly after this event Mary paid a visit to Elizabeth, who was then about to become the mother of John the Baptist, and who greeted her with the words : " Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ? "

These are the incidents narrated by St. Luke to have preceded the birth of Jesus Christ. St. Matthew, the only other Evangelist who gives details about the nativity, makes no allusion to them but records the circumstance that, whilst Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Joseph, he relates, was thereupon minded to put her away privily, but was warned by an angel in a dream not to carry out his intention. The angel said to him : " Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife ; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus—for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." Whereupon Joseph did as he was bidden, and took

Mary to be his wife in name, but not in actuality, until she had brought forth her first-born son, who was called Jesus.

Now come the stories of the announcement made to shepherds at night in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem by an angel, and of the star which guided the wise men from the east. The first is told by St. Luke ; the second by St. Matthew. When the angel appeared to the shepherds the glory of the Lord shone round about them, we are told, and they were afraid. But the angel said : " Be not afraid ; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people : for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you ; ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." A multitude of the heavenly host then suddenly appeared with the angel, praising God, and saying : " Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." The shepherds went to Bethlehem and verified the truth of the announcement. When they had done this, they made known what the angel had revealed to them ; and it may naturally be taken for granted that such a marvellous story would soon become common property and would make an unforgettable impression on the minds of all who heard it.

There is less of the supernatural, perhaps, in St. Matthew's account of the wise men. They came to Jerusalem asking, " Where is he that is born King of the Jews ? " and declaring that they had

seen His star in the east and were come to worship Him. The incident troubled Herod, who sent for the chief priests and asked them where Christ should be born. They replied : " In Bethlehem of Judæa : for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Art in no wise least among the princes of Judah : For out of thee shall come forth a governor, Which shall be shepherd of my people Israel." Accordingly Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem, requesting them to come back when they had found the Child that he might also go and worship Him. It is related that the star the wise men had seen in the east appeared to them again, and guided them to the actual spot where they found Jesus. But they were warned by God in a dream not to go back to Herod, and therefore went back to their own country by another route.

Two other circumstances are given by St. Luke in connection with the nativity of Christ. He relates that a devout man in Jerusalem named Simeon received the revelation that he should not see death before he had seen Christ. Simeon came to the temple " in the Spirit " at the moment when Jesus was brought there by His parents for the rite of circumcision. He took Him up in his arms, blessed God, and uttered those beautiful words, so familiar to everybody : " Now lettest thou thy servant depart, O Lord, According to thy word, in peace ; For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples ; A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and

the glory of thy people Israel." The same prophetic perception was granted to Anna, a widow of fourscore and four years, who served God in the temple. She came in at the same moment and also gave thanks to the Lord.

After the wise men had been warned against Herod in a dream, St. Matthew records that an angel appeared also to Joseph in a dream, telling him to flee with mother and Child into Egypt to escape the designs of Herod. There followed after their departure, as we know, the massacre of the Innocents. But, after Herod's death, an angel appeared again to Joseph in a dream and commanded him to return to the land of Israel, where he settled down eventually at Nazareth.

From this point the Gospel writers are silent regarding the childhood of Jesus. There are apocryphal stories about His early years; but practically all of them have been dismissed as fictions, often conceived in the worst possible taste. Only one glimpse into this mysterious period has been handed down to us by St. Luke. The beauty of the incident he relates is even exceeded by its significance; though its spiritual charm inspired one of the most beautiful pictures of Christ by a modern painter in the Dresden Gallery, a reproduction of which forms the Frontispiece of this book.

The story is prefaced by a few pregnant words. "And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." The familiar anecdote is then related, telling how the parents of Jesus took Him to Jerusalem with

them, for the Feast of the Passover, when He was twelve years old. On their return home they missed Him, and went back to Jerusalem in great anxiety. There they found Him, after a search of three days, in the temple, sitting in the midst of the learned doctors and astonishing them with the wisdom of His questions and answers. The parents were amazed ; but Mary said : " Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." The answer made by Jesus is deeply impressive. " Wist ye not," He asked, " that I must be about my Father's business ? " Whether the significance of the words " my Father's " was lost upon the astonished parents and the assembly of Jewish scholars, we cannot tell. But in the light of subsequent events their importance is overwhelming. What can the use of such words imply, but that Jesus was aware, at the age of twelve, of His close personal relationship with God ?

They are the first words uttered by Jesus of which record has been kept. It cannot be without intention, and therefore without profound significance, that this first recorded utterance shows that at the age of twelve, when He was only a boy, He was conscious of His divine origin. For the words cannot have been accidental. They were not understood by Joseph and Mary ; their meaning was apparently lost upon the Jewish elders, if they were heard by them also, as may be supposed ; but St. Luke did not send them ringing down the centuries that have since passed without the belief

—not altogether well founded—that they would carry conviction to the mind of every Christian.

And the fact that Jesus uttered such words at an early age is of first importance in another aspect. It has been suggested, often enough, that Jesus Christ only came to a realization of His divine mission and destiny during the last few years of His life upon earth ; that for the greater part of it He lived quietly at Nazareth, working as a carpenter, in complete ignorance of His future greatness. Such a view, if accepted, makes it difficult for many whose faith is not firmly rooted to look upon Jesus as the veritable Son of God. They find it hard to reconcile the wonder of His divine origin with the suggestion that He Himself was quite unaware of it during the greater part of His life. There is no reason to disbelieve St. Luke, who would not have recorded this single incident from the childhood of Jesus if he had not satisfied himself of its authenticity. And what other interpretation can be placed upon it than the one that Jesus, as a child, knew of His relationship to God and was consciously rendering obedience to Him who had sent His Son to be our Saviour ?

## CHAPTER II

"This is my beloved Son."

OF the eighteen years that followed the appearance of Jesus as a boy amongst the doctors in the temple, no information is forthcoming in any of the Gospels. There is only one allusion to be found which serves to throw any light on this period. In St. Mark vi. 3 it is related that, in the second year of Christ's public ministry, when He was teaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, the question was asked by those who heard Him, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" From this it is to be inferred that Jesus had been brought up during these years to follow Joseph's trade, and had been working at it, quietly and without incident, in His home at Nazareth.

But now the time had come when Christ's mission was to be disclosed to the world around Him, and when His life-work was to be crowded into the three and a half years which held within them the living germs of the world's salvation. The way had been prepared by John the Baptist, who preached in the wilderness that he was but the forerunner of One mightier than himself, the latchet of whose shoes he was unworthy to stoop down and unloose. "I baptized you with water," he declared; "but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

The day after this declaration John saw Jesus coming to him to be baptized, and, instantly recognizing Him, exclaimed : " Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

All the four Evangelists record the miraculous event, the Holy Spirit descending as a dove upon Jesus, by which His baptism by John was accompanied. In the Gospel of St. John, i. 32-4, John the Baptist's own words are given : " I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven ; and it abode upon him. And I knew him not : but he that sent me to baptize with water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." There is a slight difference in the versions of the other Evangelists. St. Matthew and St. Mark state that Jesus, when He was baptized, saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove ; whilst St. Luke records both incidents as a fact. The fourfold version, agreeing in all its details, establishes that the Spirit of God descended upon Christ in visible form, and was seen by both Jesus and John the Baptist, and probably—in view of St. Luke's statement—by others who were present and witnessed the immersion of Jesus in the river Jordan.

But this was not the only supernatural manifestation on this occasion. With the exception of St. John, who makes no allusion to it, the Evangelists record that the appearance of the Holy Spirit was

accompanied or followed by a voice from heaven, which said : " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

One is faced with the question, Did these two supernatural events accompany the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan ?

The record in all four Gospels is so plain, so devoid of ambiguity, that we can only deny its truth by charging the four authors with deliberate invention. However theoretically possible this may be, it is not too much to say that the common sense of the combined Christian nations of the world—to put it at its lowest—has agreed to accept the good faith and intentional veracity of the four Evangelists. Here, then, is a case in which their accounts—agreeing in all details—must be believed. And what interpretation can be placed upon them other than that here, clearly and unmistakably, is one of many proofs of Christ's deity ? He was proclaimed from heaven to be the Son of God at the very commencement of His ministry, and a visible sign was given such as has been vouchsafed to no other person in the world's history.

There is one other episode which should be mentioned in this connection. On the day following the baptism of Jesus, it happened that John the Baptist, accompanied by two of his disciples, saw Him walking, and said once again : " Behold the Lamb of God." One of these disciples was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter : and it is related that having followed Jesus and spoken to Him, he went to find his brother Simon and declared to him,

"We have found the Messiah." After which he took his brother with him to Jesus.

Nor is this the only recognition which Jesus received at the outset of His public ministry. Returning to Galilee next day, Jesus found Philip and said to him: "Follow me." It is stated by St. John that Philip then sought Nathanael, and reported to him: "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." He accompanied Philip, and Jesus greeted him with words implying recognition. "Whence knowest thou me?" asked Nathanael. And when Jesus said: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee," Nathanael exclaimed: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel." The reply of Jesus to this outburst of enthusiastic belief contained words of significant import:

"Because I said unto thee I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

The impression made by the first personal contact with Christ upon these several individuals is of intense interest. As evidence of His deity it has only, of course, the value that can be attached to sincerely formed opinions. But the words used by Christ to Nathanael stand in an altogether different category. Either they are idle boasting, or they

proceed from a divine Being conscious of His deity. It is merely begging the question to try to discover some vague general application to rob them of their true implication. We have to face the alternative : Were these words true, or was Christ a self-deceived religious fanatic ? The question is answered by the whole development of His character, which has stood the test of nearly two thousand years and remains immeasurably above all human achievement.

## CHAPTER III

“ I that speak unto thee am he.”

THE first miracle wrought by Christ has created a great deal of discussion, and has been the cause of much perplexity to those who are unable to associate our Lord with the joyful things of this world. The question that concerns us most of all is, Was this miracle actually performed by Him? The sole authority for the story of the marriage at Cana in Galilee, when Jesus turned the water into wine, is St. John. But it is set forth in such detail, and in such unmistakable terms, that there is no doubt possible unless the Evangelist is charged with deliberate invention. The facts are simple enough. Jesus and His disciples were bidden to a marriage feast, at which His mother was also present. Wine was an indispensable part of the customary entertainment provided for the guests on such an occasion. Apparently as the feasting proceeded, the providers of the refreshments ran short of wine; for the mother of Jesus, approaching Him, said: “ They have no wine.” Six large waterpots of stone were standing there, and Jesus commanded that they should be filled with water. When this was accomplished, He said: “ Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast.” In tasting the water

that was made wine, the ruler of the feast, addressing the bridegroom, said : " Every man setteth on first the good wine ; and when men have drunk freely, then that which is worse : thou hast kept the good wine until now." St. John concludes the account with the words : " This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory ; and his disciples believed on him."

The absurd suggestion has been made, by some of those who are anxious to explain away all the miracles recorded in the New Testament, that the water on this occasion was not really turned into wine, but that Jesus made use of psychic powers possessed by Him in an exceptional degree to hypnotize those who were present into the illusion that they were drinking wine and not water. As this hypothesis contains the implication that Jesus was a charlatan ready to trick people, after the fashion of an Eastern conjuror, it can only be dismissed with contempt. It would require a greater measure of credulity to believe this of the noblest Being that has ever trod this earth, than to believe in the occurrence of a miracle unexplained by the natural laws with which modern science is familiar.

When it is pointed out that no English gentleman of to-day would stoop to impose upon his fellow-countrymen, by any species of trickery, in order to glorify either himself or any noble cause to which he was attached, this base suggestion has been sufficiently disposed of as both malicious and

ridiculous. If St. John's testimony is not to be discredited, there remains the only possible alternative of believing in the actuality of this first miracle. And with this belief one must accept the inference, equally unavoidable, that Christ approved of innocent feasting and enjoyment and liked to see people happy around Him.

In these first months of His public ministry, words were used by Jesus Christ, on more than one occasion, which, if they are to be believed at all, clearly establish His deity. When He drove the money-changers and dealers out of the temple, He spoke of it as "my Father's house"; and when the Jews asked: "What sign shewest thou to us, seeing that thou doest these things?" He replied: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." "He spake," says St. John, "of the temple of his body"; and the disciples remembered His words when He was risen from the dead. Three years, then, before the crucifixion, Christ was publicly prophesying His death and resurrection in symbolical language—not understood at the time the words were uttered, but plain and obvious in the light of subsequent events. Has any other man, in the history of the world, given utterance to such an inspired statement about his own destiny?

But if the meaning of the words spoken to the Jews after the purging of the temple was unintelligible to those who heard them, Jesus was far more explicit in His discourse with Nicodemus, the Pharisee who came to Him by night with the con-

fession that he recognized Him to be a teacher come from God. To Nicodemus, Jesus spoke freely and openly: "If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things? And no man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Nicodemus did not understand, of course, Christ's allusion to His crucifixion; but the declaration of His deity was unmistakable. It was repeated shortly afterwards, when Jesus had gone into Judæa with His disciples, by John the Baptist. "For he whom God hath sent," John declared to the Jews who had come to him to settle some dispute they had had with his disciples, "speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall

not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Passing through Samaria, a few months later, the wonderful meeting took place between Jesus and the woman of Sychar at Jacob's Well. The exquisite words used by our Lord on that occasion might indeed haunt the memory for all time: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." When, at the end of the conversation, the woman said to Him: "I know that Messiah cometh (which is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things," Jesus made that momentous declaration:

"I that speak unto thee am he."

Soon after this event Jesus, returning to Galilee, came again to Cana where the water had been made wine. A certain nobleman, whose son was dangerously ill at Capernaum, came to Him and entreated Him to go back with him and heal his son, whom he declared to be at the point of death. Jesus said: "Go thy way; thy son liveth"; and the man, believing His word, started off home again. On the way he was met by his servants, who brought the good news that his son had recovered. On inquiry, he found that the fever had abated at the seventh hour—the same hour in which Jesus had said to him: "Thy son liveth."

Those who vaguely state that Jesus Christ only effected faith cures, such as are claimed to be performed at the present day, should

note that in this, His second miracle, the person healed was lying ill at a distance of more than fifteen miles from the spot where our Lord gave the father His assurance that his son was cured.

## CHAPTER IV

“ Take up thy bed, and walk.”

THE next miracle was performed when Jesus returned to Jerusalem for His second Passover ; and the fact that the incident took place on the Jewish Sabbath led to a convincing public declaration on the part of our Lord, when He was assailed by the Jews on that account.

By the sheep market at Jerusalem there was a pool named Bethesda, the waters of which were popularly supposed to possess miraculous healing power. The legend was that at a certain season an angel went down and troubled the water, and that the first sick person who then stepped into it was cured of his disease. As Jesus came by, He saw lying on a couch beside the pool a man who had been infirm for thirty-eight years. In reply to Christ's question, “ Wouldest thou be made whole ? ” the man answered : “ Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool : but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.” Jesus said to him : “ Arise, take up thy bed, and walk ” ; whereupon the man was immediately made whole, and took up his bed, and walked.

This wonderful act of mercy enraged the Jews, who accused Christ of breaking the Sabbath and sought to kill Him. The incident led to the most complete avowal, by our Lord, of His divine origin and power. If the words put into His mouth by St. John are faithfully reported by the most lofty and spiritual-minded of all the apostles, there is no room left for doubt as to the deity of Him who spoke them. It is inconceivable that an ordinary man would dare to stand up and publicly identify himself with God by the use of such phrases as Jesus employed on this occasion. To one of our Lord's unexampled purity and goodness it would be impossible, unless He were, indeed, the Son of God. It is equally inconceivable that St. John drew upon his imagination in recording this speech (v. 19-36), in the desire to make the words of his Master coincide with his own impressions and beliefs.

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing : for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth : and greater works than these will he shew him, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgement unto the Son ; that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth

.

not the Son honoureth not the Father which sent him. . . .

“The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself : and he gave him authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of man. . . .

“But the witness which I have is greater than that of John : for the works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.”

By what perversity of judgment an educated person, reading these passages from the Gospel of St. John, could persuade himself that Jesus meant by them that He was only a Son of God in the sense that anybody on earth may claim to be, is a riddle we cannot attempt to solve. A clearer declaration of His majesty and power, derived explicitly from His unique relationship to God, could hardly be imagined. The fact that it was repeated on many other occasions, in the course of the years that followed, and that all the Evangelists bear frequent witness to it in their records, should be sufficient corroboration to satisfy the most stubbornly cautious mind. It would, at any rate, be regarded as convincing and unquestionable evidence in a Court of Justice, where the credibility of evidence is carefully weighed.

Since the apostles no faith healer, within the knowledge of man, ever said to a paralysed and impotent cripple : " Take up thy bed, and walk." Yet this was one of the least of the miracles performed by Christ in restoring the victims of sin or misfortune to health and vigour.

A cure, more remarkable in its details, was effected by Jesus shortly afterwards, when He returned to Galilee from Jerusalem and settled down for a time at Capernaum. Whilst teaching in the synagogue there, the discourse was suddenly interrupted by a man described by St. Mark and St. Luke as having an unclean spirit. The assembled congregation was startled by the cry : " What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Jesus rebuked him, saying : " Hold thy peace, and come out of him." Whereupon the man was thrown down in the midst of them, and, as the two Evangelists state, the unclean spirit came out of him.

These cases in which serious disorders of the brain are attributed to demoniac possession are frequently mentioned in the Gospels. The possibility of possession by an invading spirit is, as is well known, a subject of modern controversy. In the case of trance mediums, such a surrender is declared to be voluntary. Others have argued that actual possession by an evil spirit may have been a phenomenon, perhaps not infrequent, which occurred in the days of our Lord, but which from some unexplained

cause exists no longer. There is no need to enter into any argument on the subject here. It does not matter whether madness is a brain disorder or is attributed to possession by an invading spirit—the instantaneous cure, in whatever form it was made, is equally miraculous in either case. It would, in fact, be simpler, one would think, to cast out a devil than to cure an obscure and unintelligible disease of which the violent outward symptoms were alone manifest.

Nor is the credibility of the Gospel writers called in question in either case. Whether demoniac possession was or was not an actuality in their day, the belief in its existence as a cause of certain disorders was held universally in the East. The Jews themselves employed exorcism in some cases; though there is no record of such marvellous cures being effected, or even attempted, as those made by our Lord.

The miraculous draught of fishes mentioned by St. Luke (v. 1-11) may be passed over, perhaps, as having no direct bearing on the question of Christ's deity; although the incident impressed itself at once upon Simon Peter, and upon James and John the sons of Zebedee, as an exhibition of godlike power. Hence Peter's recorded words, uttered upon his knees at the feet of Jesus: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

But the cures effected by Jesus at this period establish unmistakable proofs of the divine source of His power. The three Synoptists record the

healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law, who was ill of a great fever at Capernaum, merely by taking her by the hand. The same evening, they testify, many sick persons were brought to Him and healed ; and the remarkable testimony is added by St. Luke that " devils also came out from many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Son of God." The words were presumably spoken by the afflicted persons themselves, as is also alleged in the case where spirits of the dead are said to speak through the mouth of the entranced medium ; but this would not detract from the remarkable nature of an occurrence repeated in certain forms of mental disorder.

Most wonderful of all, Jesus, who had left Capernaum and was now preaching in the synagogues at other places in Galilee, healed a bad case of leprosy. This dreadful disease, for which—as the result of anxious research work and experiment on the part of modern medical science—a remedy has only just been found, was regarded as incurable in those days. Its victims were outlawed and driven away from all contact with the rest of the world. No Jewish priest made any attempt at exorcism in such cases ; nor was the scourge attributed to the malevolence of evil spirits. In this case, Jesus merely touched the leper and said : " Be thou made clean ;" and we are told by three Evangelists that, directly these words had been spoken, the leprosy departed from the sufferer and he was cleansed.

As may be supposed, a cure so unprecedented

and extraordinary made a tremendous sensation in the surrounding districts ; and it drew such multitudes of people, many of whom came to be healed, that Jesus was ultimately compelled to withdraw Himself altogether into the desert.

## CHAPTER V

"Thy sins are forgiven thee."

WHEN Jesus had returned with His disciples once more to Capernaum, an incident occurred which brought a new element into the performance of His miracles. The event is recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels, St. Mark and St. Luke giving a more detailed account of it. Jesus, on His arrival at Capernaum, was besieged by large numbers of people at the house to which He had resorted. As He sat there preaching to them, some men attempted to bring a paralysed man into the house in order that Jesus might have compassion on him and heal him. The crowd was so great, however, that it proved impossible to force an entry by the door. Accordingly, determined not to be thwarted in carrying out their good intention, they climbed to the housetop, made a hole in the roof, and let down the sick man's couch through the aperture. Jesus, moved by this exhibition of faith, addressed the paralysed man, saying to him: "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." These words startled the Scribes and Pharisees who were astonished spectators of the scene, and they began to question each other, "Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Perceiving

the trend of their thoughts, Jesus said to them : " What reason ye in your hearts ? Whether is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee ; or to say, Arise, and walk ? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," our Lord continued, turning to the paralysed man and addressing him, " I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch and go unto thy house." Immediately, in the presence of the amazed throng, this hopelessly stricken man recovered the use of his limbs, took up his couch, and left the house glorifying God.

This display of divine power seems to have had the unusual effect of convincing even the Scribes and Pharisees who witnessed it. For we are told by St. Luke that "amazement took hold on all, and they glorified God ; and they were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day." Jesus meant them to understand that the power to heal the paralysed man could be vested only in Him who also had power to forgive sins. And He gave such convincing proof of His assertion that no man present could fail to acknowledge that His authority was derived direct from God. If this miracle stood by itself, with all the significant details by which it was accompanied, it is hard to see how any person of intelligence—believing in the truth of this threefold record—could fail to come to the same conclusion. We cannot have it both ways. Either the account is true, and the inference, drawn even by the hostile Scribes and Pharisees who were there, unavoidable ; or there

was deliberate collusion, on the part of the three Gospel writers, to make the facts harmonize with their own desire to glorify the name of their Master at the expense of the truth.

Far different was the effect of the next great manifestation of healing power. Christ had reproved the Pharisees for their hypocritical observance of the Sabbath, which involved them in multitudes of absurdities. This was bitterly resented by them, and they watched for an opportunity of retaliation. The chance came when Jesus again entered their synagogue, where a man was present whose right hand was withered. Knowing the thoughts of His enemies, Jesus told the man to stand up ; and then asked them if it were lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm—to save a life or to destroy it? To this question they made no answer. Then, looking round upon them all, Jesus commanded the man : “Stretch forth thy hand” ; and, when he did so, his hand was restored whole like the other.

That the Pharisees were only angered the more by this miracle, instead of being impressed by it, is an excellent illustration of the fact that human beings will generally only believe what they wish to believe. The Pharisees were absolutely case-hardened as far as their narrow-minded interpretation of the Mosaic law was concerned. They would sooner declare that good works came from the devil than admit that their own narrow conception of religious duties was wrong in any particular. Accordingly, instead of perceiving the reality of

Christ's claim to be the Son of God, they went away and leagued themselves with the Herodians—a political sect with whom they had hitherto been on terms of enmity—conspiring with them as to how they might destroy Him.

The healing of the centurion's servant, which followed soon after these events, presents the same characteristic that distinguished the cure of the nobleman's son at Capernaum. The cure was effected by Jesus at a distance from the patient, whom He never saw. It was a faith cure in a very different sense from that which this term is generally intended to imply. There is also a discrepancy in the accounts given by St. Matthew and St. Luke. St. Matthew states (viii. 5) that the centurion himself came to Jesus, as He entered Capernaum, after His withdrawal to the lake and the choosing of the twelve apostles, and begged Him to heal his servant who was ill. Whilst St. Luke (vii. 2-10) records that the centurion sent Jewish elders to make this request on his behalf; and that when Jesus complied with it and drew near to the house, he again sent out friends with the message: "Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say the word, and my servant shall be healed. . . ."

It seems probable that the fuller account given by St. Luke relates the true sequence of the facts of the case; and it also establishes once more that that was no collusion between the different Gospel writers. Each gave his own version of what had

occurred ; and it need hardly be emphasized that trifling variations in this kind of evidence, when there is no contradiction of any essential part of the story, only make it the more trustworthy and acceptable.

To return to the feature of this miracle which differentiates it, and the class to which it belongs, from other miraculous cures made by our Lord, it should be noted that it was brought about, not by the faith of the sick person, but by the faith of the intermediary who sought the good offices of the Saviour. When Christ was told that the centurion merely petitioned humbly that He should say the word, without troubling to come to his house, and restore the dying man to health, He exclaimed : “ I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” And immediately the centurion's request was granted, the servant being made whole in the same hour. The power exercised by Christ, on this and on similar occasions, was totally different from the faith cure—by no means unknown at the present day—which rests mainly, if not entirely, upon the faith of the person who wishes to be cured. Many cures of the latter kind were also effected by Jesus ; though for the most part of such a miraculous nature that the divine power is always conspicuously the motive force.

But here we are confronted with an altogether different problem. The cure is effected, not through the faith of the sufferer, but as a reward to a third person for his touching and simple belief in the

power and goodness of God. It thus becomes at once a miracle which admits of no explanation that can bring it into harmony with the known laws which govern the material universe. We have, in fact, to admit the supernatural; and to admit the supernatural, in this relation, is surely to admit the element of deity.

## CHAPTER VI

“ Peace, be still ! ”

A GREAT and awe-inspiring event took place, according to St. Luke, on the day following the cure of the centurion's servant. Accompanied by His disciples, and followed by a great concourse of people, Jesus went to a city of Galilee called Nain. As they approached the gate of the city they met a tragic procession coming out of it. The body of a young man was being carried from the city to the burial-ground outside ; and behind the bier came his mother as chief mourner. He was her only son, and she was already widowed. Jesus had compassion on her, and said : “ Weep not.” Then He came and touched the bier, the bearers of which stood still at His approach.

It is impossible to conceive the awe and astonishment with which those who surrounded the little group must have heard those wonderful words of the Saviour, uttered for the first time on earth : “ Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” What can their feelings have been, accustomed as many of them had become to witness the miracles of healing effected by Jesus, when the dead man, obeying this voice of authority, sat up and began to speak ?

The scene baffles description. St. Luke, with the marvellous restraint and simplicity which characterize all the Gospel narratives, says : "And He gave him to his mother." Then, in conclusion : "And fear took hold on all : and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is arisen among us ; and that God hath visited his people."

Here is no wonderful healing of a person afflicted with some incurable disease, or dying of a malignant and devastating fever. Jesus Christ has now wrought a miracle that can be ascribed to no agency but God's. Perhaps some of those who were present, on this first occasion when the dead was restored to life, recalled the words, recorded in the Gospel of St. John (v. 21, 25), which Jesus uttered when the Jews accused Him of healing the infirm man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day :

"For as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth also whom he will. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God : and they that hear shall live."

But the subject of raising from the dead will be more fully discussed in a later chapter, when the greatest of all Christ's miracles, the restoring to life of Lazarus after his body had been buried for four days, will come under consideration.

A large number of cures are recorded in bulk

without the mention of any distinguishing details. It is simply stated that multitudes of people came to Jesus on various occasions, bringing their sick relatives and friends with them to be cured, and that our Lord healed them. An incident of this kind happened when John the Baptist, who had heard in his prison of Christ's works, sent two of his disciples with the inquiry, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" The messengers found Christ in the act of effecting a number of cures of which no individual details are forthcoming. He sent them back to the prison with the message, reported both by St. Matthew (xi. 4, 5), and St. Luke (vii. 22): "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them."

About this time a man was brought to Jesus who was both blind and dumb, and was immediately healed so that he could see and speak. When the Pharisees heard of it, they declared: "This man doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." The reply given by Jesus convicted His accusers of very bad logic: "If Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God

come upon you." It is difficult for us to-day to believe that good works of the purest and noblest character could possibly be sincerely ascribed, by men of understanding and education, to an evil agency. But the fact that the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders persisted in this explanation of Christ's miracles, to the bitter end, casts a painful light on the extremes that finality of mind can achieve in the direction of intellectual absurdity.

Jesus was now to give to His disciples, and through them to a world which has for the most part remained unconvinced to the present day, another astonishing proof of His divine power. The incident is vouched for by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke ; and it may be that they all derived their information from Simon Peter, the main source from which the events narrated in the three Gospels were compiled.

After teaching on the shore all day, Jesus proposed to His disciples in the evening that they should cross over to the other side of the Lake of Galilee. They accordingly embarked on a ship and set sail, after sending away the crowds that had come there to hear Jesus preach. When they were in the midst of the lake, one of those sudden storms arose which are a dangerous feature of all inland seas. A violent wind blew, the waves swamped the ship, and it was soon filled with water. Even these experienced fishermen, who must have been accustomed to perils of this nature, were alarmed at the force of

the tempest ; and in their fear of shipwreck they went to the stern of the vessel, where Jesus lay sleeping peacefully with His head upon a pillow, and awoke Him with their terrified cry : " Master, master, we perish ! " St. Mark even states that the words they used in their terror were : " Master, carest thou not that we perish ? "

Upon hearing their cry of distress, Jesus awoke and stood up. He rebuked the wind, and said to the sea : " Peace, be still ! " And thereupon, we are told, the wind ceased and there was a great calm. " Where is your faith ? " Christ asked them. But they were both afraid and astonished, and could only whisper to one another : " Who then is this, that he commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey him ? "

If this story is accepted as true, every doubt as to the divine origin of Jesus Christ must vanish. It can only be false if it was deliberately invented. To say that the whole thing was pure coincidence, and that Jesus had the good fortune to rebuke the wind at the precise moment when it was about to cease of its own accord, only shifts the argument to the hopelessly discredited theory that Christ was a charlatan and trickster, who had the luck to appear to work wonders through a fortunate series of adventitious circumstances. No such accusation, happily, can be sustained for a moment. There is probably no person of average capa-

city, even outside the Christian religion, who would dream of making such an assertion after examining all the evidence as to Christ's nobility of character which the New Testament contains.

## CHAPTER VII

“The child is not dead, but sleepeth.”

THE calming of the storm on the Sea of Galilee was followed by a miracle, wrought by Jesus when He landed on the other side, which presents more difficulties to the understanding than probably any other. The facts are set forth very clearly in the three Synoptic Gospels, the only discrepancy in the several accounts being that St. Matthew mentions two maniacs, whilst St. Mark and St. Luke refer only to one. Taking St. Mark's version, which tallies almost exactly with St. Luke's and was obviously derived from the same source, what happened was this :

Directly Jesus left the ship and set foot on shore, He was confronted by the terrible spectacle of a madman, whose disorder was of such a violent nature that he continually tore off the chains with which he was bound. This poor demented wretch lived in the open amongst the tombs, like a wild beast, spending night and day wandering about, crying, and cutting himself with stones. As soon as he saw Jesus, he rushed to Him and flung himself down at His feet, crying out with a loud voice : “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God ? I adjure thee by God,

torment me not." Meanwhile Christ had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man ; and a remarkable dialogue is recorded as having taken place. Jesus asked : "What is thy name?" and the answer was : "My name is Legion, for we are many." The unclean spirit is spoken of partly in the singular, St. Mark stating (v. 10) that "he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country."

On the slope of the mountains near by it happened that a great herd of swine was feeding ; and the devils, now spoken of in the plural, begged Jesus to send them into the swine. "And he gave them leave. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered into the swine : and the herd rushed down the steep into the sea, in number about two thousand ; and they were choked in the sea." The swineherds rushed off when they saw the destruction of their herd, and spread the news of what had happened. Soon Jesus and His disciples were surrounded by a crowd, who found the maniac sitting with them fully restored and in possession of his senses. But when they heard the full story of what had taken place, they took alarm and entreated Jesus to depart from their coasts.

A point which appears to have staggered some people in this narrative is the inference, which they seem to draw from it, that the maniac, in order that this enormous herd of swine should be provided with a sufficient number of devils to cause

their mad flight into the sea, must have been possessed with countless unclean spirits. The inference is of course absurd. One devil alone would have been ample to cause all the commotion. Everybody in the least conversant with natural history, or who has had any experience in dealing with flocks and herds of birds or animals, knows how instinctively they follow the leadership of one of their members. The flight of one rook will cause every bird to rise simultaneously from a field in a panic-stricken flight. One frightened ox will stampede a whole herd. The response to a lead of this kind is so spontaneous that naturalists have been brought to the conclusion that some sort of telepathy must exist between animals or birds of the same species to account for it.

Although this well-recognized fact disposes of the objection that hundreds or thousands of devils would have been necessary to cause the behaviour of the Gadarene swine, it leaves untouched the statement, repeated by St. Mark and St. Luke, that "many devils" had entered into the possessed man. The whole subject of possession, to which allusion has already been made in Chapter IV., is full of mystery. A great deal has been conjectured about it. But very little is really known; and that little has only been accepted by a small number of scientific investigators. To state anything about it with certainty is therefore impossible, at any rate in connection with the subject under discussion.

But one thing may be pointed out which serves to throw at least a little light into a very dark place. A phenomenon known as "multiplex personality" has for many years attracted the attention of psychological students in various countries—particularly in France—and has been made the subject of much interesting experiment. It has been established beyond doubt, chiefly by means of hypnotism, that a patient afflicted with mental disorder will often act as if his individuality had been split up into several separate personalities, each of which differs in a marked degree from the others. The alternating states are sometimes good and sometimes wholly bad—even criminal—in the same individual. There have been instances in which the personality evinced in one state has actually been hostile, in a pronounced manner, to the original personality of the mental patient. In one case, alluded to by F. W. H. Myers in his *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, the physicians recorded sixteen different stages or personalities, with distinct memories and different characteristics.

Fortified with this knowledge contributed by modern medical scientific investigation, we can surely face with equanimity the statement that this maniac on the shores of the Sea of Galilee was possessed by many unclean spirits. We no more understand split personalities than we understand possession by one or more devils. But if we are ready to accept the evidence in

one case, there is no reason why we should hesitate to accept it in the other. Both are dependent upon the veracity of eye-witnesses; and if we are satisfied of their *bona fides*, we can, and indeed we must, believe their statements of fact, although the underlying causes of the manifestation are beyond human knowledge.

It has been suggested that Jesus gave no direct order to the unclean spirits to enter into the swine, and this has led to the assumption that the Evangelists merely took it for granted, from the fact that the herd rushed into the sea in a panic, that Jesus was the author of the incident. Two things may be pointed out in this connection. In the first place, St. Matthew states that Jesus, in response to the devil's petition to be allowed to enter the swine, gave His consent by uttering the word "Go!"; whilst St. Mark plainly declares, "And he gave them leave." But even supposing the eye-witnesses, who presumably reported the event to the Evangelists, to have been a little confused or uncertain in their minds as to what exactly was said by our Lord on the occasion, there remains an important factor which must help to dispose, in this and in other cases in dispute, of any doubt as to the accuracy of the record. The disciples were constantly with Christ. Can we believe that the miracles He wrought were never alluded to in all the intimate talks which must have taken place between them? or that Christ, who could read

men's hearts and gave proof of His power to do so, would wittingly have left His disciples, whom He was training and teaching for the great purpose of establishing the truth, under a complete misconception of the works performed by Him for the chief purpose of convincing the world ?

From the country of the Gadarenes Jesus took ship with His disciples and crossed over again to the other side. Crowds gathered about Him directly He landed, and then a most touching scene was enacted which led to another of those amazing miracles wrought by Jesus Christ upon earth.

As He stood there, a ruler of the synagogue named Jairus came to Him through the press of people and flung himself at His feet. "My little daughter is at the point of death," exclaimed the grief-stricken father : "I pray thee, that thou come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be made whole, and live." To such an appeal Jesus never lent a deaf ear. He started off at once with His disciples to accompany Jairus to his home, a multitude of people going with them.

On the way an incident occurred which diverted attention for the moment from their main purpose. Amongst the crowd was a woman who had suffered for twelve years from an incurable disease. In the belief that she would be healed if she could only touch the border of Christ's garment, this woman pushed her way through the throng of people and contrived to effect her purpose. Instantly, her

infirmity left her. Jesus asked : " Who is it that touched me ? " and when the disciples pointed out that He was naturally being pressed by the mass of people around them, He said again : " Some one did touch me : for I perceived that power had gone forth from me." The woman then came forward, fell down before Him, and confessed publicly for what reason she had touched His garment, and how she had been immediately cured of her complaint. Jesus dismissed her with the kind words : " Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole ; go in peace."

Undoubtedly a faith cure ; but under what exceptional conditions ! The healer exerts no kind of force, except that which radiates from His own personality. We have Christ's assurance, in the words He is recorded to have spoken to the woman, that her faith in His power was the main factor in her cure. But what sort of power can it have been which impregnated even the garment He wore ? For Jesus was Himself taken unawares. He said : " I perceived that power had gone forth from me " ; and He cannot be suspected of affected ignorance when He asked : " Who is it that touched me ? " Many cases of faith cures have been placed on record ; and public healings of this nature, in churches and elsewhere, have been frequently in evidence during the past few years. But no case parallel with that recorded above, on the testimony of three Evangelists, has ever been adduced since Christ unknowingly healed this woman by the mere fact of accidental contact on His part.

At the moment when Jesus had brought this episode to a conclusion, messengers came from the ruler of the synagogue's house bringing bad news. "Thy daughter is dead," they said to him; "why troublest thou the Master any further?" But Jesus quickly comforted the bereaved father with the significant words: "Fear not: only believe, and she shall be made whole." Accompanied by Peter and two other disciples, He came to the house of Jairus where He found a crowd of people—evidently including professional mourners—weeping and wailing and making a noise. When Jesus had entered, He said to them all: "Why make ye a tumult, and weep? The child is not dead, but sleepeth."

Those who were present laughed derisively at these words. But Christ turned them all out; and then, taking the father and mother of the child and His three disciples with Him, He entered the chamber where the body was lying. With simple confidence, which must have overwhelmed those who were present with awe and amazement, Jesus took the little girl by the hand, and said to her: "Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise." And, as St. Luke puts it, "her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately."

This wonderful event happened in the presence of five persons, three of whom were disciples of Christ. The three Evangelists who record the circumstances had therefore abundant sources of first-hand information. From the moment when the child's death was tragically announced at a

distance from the house where she lay ill, Jesus confidently declared that He would restore her to life. On a future occasion He was to display a still more miraculous power over the great mystery of death.

## CHAPTER VIII

“ It is I ; be not afraid.”

IT was at this time that Jesus sent out the twelve apostles on a great healing and preaching mission. Before they started, two by two, on their journey, He gave them explicit instructions as to what they should do and how they should conduct themselves. But an important circumstance in the inauguration of this mission is recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels. Christ is stated to have conferred upon these disciples the power to cast out devils, and to heal all diseases. In His charge to them, He said : “ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils.” And although no mention is made of anybody being restored to life in the course of this expedition, it is declared that the apostles cast out many devils and healed many cases of sickness.

Who can He have been who was able to confer upon others the ability to work miracles of healing ? Here again we are faced with evidence, the source of which is unimpeachable, of Christ’s divine relationship. Remarkable things have been personally achieved by supremely gifted men in all ages ; but there is no other instance in the world’s history of a man calling a number of individuals together, and conferring upon them, by the mere exercise

of his own authority, powers which far transcend the ordinary powers attained by mankind.

St. Matthew records two miracles which appear to have taken place just before the apostles were sent out on their mission. The first of them, the healing of two blind men, was accompanied by a remarkable dialogue. For some way Christ was followed by these blind men, who cried out to Him : " Have mercy on us, thou son of David." Upon reaching His destination, Jesus asked them : " Believe ye that I am able to do this ? " They replied : " Yea, Lord." Jesus then touched their eyes, saying : " According to your faith be it done unto you." And their eyes were opened. The cure in this case was made dependent upon the belief of the afflicted persons. One may therefore call it a faith cure. But what other instances of restoring sight to the blind occur elsewhere than in the records of Christ's works and delegated powers contained in the New Testament ? Hardly had this miracle happened than a dumb man was brought to Jesus. He is described by St. Matthew as being possessed with a devil ; and when Jesus had cast out the devil, it is stated, the dumb man's speech was restored to him. There is no question of a faith cure here, apparently. Jesus had compassion when He saw the condition of this poor wretch, and healed him promptly and unconditionally. His powers, then, were unlimited and were in no way dependent upon the co-operation of the person whose cure was desired.

After the apostles had returned from their mission,

Jesus went with them by ship to a quiet spot at the north-east of the Sea of Galilee. Their object of obtaining a little rest was frustrated, however. It was soon discovered where they had gone, and multitudes of people went on foot from neighbouring towns and villages and arrived there first. When Jesus and His disciples disembarked, they found a great concourse of people—men, women, and children—already waiting for them. Jesus responded at once to their needs, and spent the whole day teaching them and healing their sick. But when evening came a serious situation developed. In the excitement of listening to the inspired words of Christ, and of watching His marvellous acts of mercy, the crowds paid no attention to the passing of time. They had made no provision for their own sustenance for so long a period ; and now, no doubt, men and women were beginning to feel the pinch of hunger and the children were crying out for food.

It was impossible to procure supplies in such a spot ; nor would two hundred pennyworth of bread, as suggested by one or more of the disciples, even if it could have been obtained in time, have sufficed for the needs of such a multitude. The disciples wanted Jesus to send the people away, so that they might forage for themselves. But Jesus, touched with pity for all this privation endured for His sake, had other plans. On inquiry He found that all the provisions they had with them consisted of five barley loaves and two small fishes. Thereupon He commanded the disciples to make them all sit down on the grass in companies of

fifty and one hundred ; and by this means the number of men, besides women and children, was found to be five thousand. Then, taking the bread and the fishes, He looked up to heaven and blessed them, broke the bread and the fishes into morsels, and gave them to the disciples to distribute amongst the people ; and every man, woman, and child enjoyed a plentiful meal. Nor did the wonder of it cease at this point. When they had all had enough to eat, Jesus ordered His disciples to gather up the fragments that remained ; and the broken pieces of the feast were found to fill twelve baskets.

The amazement of the multitude at this astonishing miracle is left mainly to the imagination. Of the Gospel writers, who all supply detailed accounts of the incident, St. John contents himself with stating that those who witnessed it declared : " This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world." Has the impression become less vivid in the course of nineteen centuries ? This miracle, done in the presence of thousands of people and testified to by some of the noblest characters that the human race has produced, contains in itself abundant proof of the divine power by which alone it could have been wrought. Is it because we are all so familiar with the story, and have therefore ceased to reflect upon all that it implies, that it is so often stated, even by ministers of religion, that the deity of Christ rests entirely upon faith and that there exists no evidence in actual proof of it ?

It has been objected that the Gospel narratives do not state that there was any multiplication of

the loaves and fishes ; and that no miracle at all was wrought, except that individuals amongst the multitude, inspired by the example of Jesus and the disciples, began to share with their neighbours supplies of food they had secreted about them. The objection cannot hold water. St. Mark (vi. 41) says : " and the two fishes divided he among them all." Whilst St. John (vi. 11) puts it even more conclusively : " likewise also of the fishes as much as they would." If these statements do not point explicitly to the multiplication of the supplies, what other interpretation can common sense apply to them ?

The events of that evening in the desert place on the shore of the lake led to another episode which appears to have had a more startling and convincing effect upon the disciples than the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. After the gathering up of the fragments, Jesus told His disciples to go on board their vessel and cross to the other side of the lake, whilst He remained behind and sent the people away to their homes. When the crowd had dispersed, Jesus went up into a mountain to pray. Meanwhile the disciples were making their way slowly and laboriously across the water, in the face of a contrary wind. We are told that Jesus, from the land, perceived them toiling with the oars in this manner ; and about the fourth watch of the night, in the early hours of the morning, He was seen by them walking upon the sea and coming towards their ship.

Thinking it was a spirit, they cried out in fear.

But the voice of Jesus came to them over the water : " It is I ; be not afraid." And then followed that characteristic episode when Peter essayed to walk on the sea and meet Jesus, but, soon overcome with fear at the roughness of the water, lost his nerve and began to sink. Jesus, catching him as he went down, smilingly reproved him with the words : " O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? " As soon as Jesus stepped into the ship, the wind ceased ; and St. Matthew states that all who were on board came and worshipped Him, saying : " Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

This story is related by all the Evangelists except St. Luke, who makes no allusion to it. The three versions correspond in all the essential points, except that St. Matthew alone mentions Peter's attempt to walk on the water. But they all state, plainly and unambiguously, that Jesus walked to the ship upon the sea ; and no doubt is left as to the profound impression this miracle made upon the minds of those who witnessed it.

## CHAPTER IX

“ O woman, great is thy faith ! ”

**B**OTH St. Matthew and St. Mark make record of the large numbers of sick healed by Jesus when He and His disciples, after the incident described in the previous chapter, landed in the neighbourhood of Capernaum. The news of His arrival spread like wildfire. Wherever Jesus went, when He entered a town or village, the sick were laid down in the streets that He might heal them as He passed by. No details are given by the two Evangelists ; but they state that whoever touched Christ was made whole. And because this extraordinary manifestation of healing power is alluded to in the Gospels as being constantly manifested, we must not lose sight of its value as testifying to a divine quality, present in Jesus Christ, which no other human being has ever shared with Him.

From the plain of Gennesaret, after this great healing campaign, Jesus went in a northerly direction to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. No doubt the strenuous labour of the past few days had proved a considerable strain, and He was greatly in need of rest. For it must never be forgotten that our Lord, in subjecting Himself to the ordinary conditions of humanity's life upon earth, had also accepted our physical weaknesses. But the dis-

ciples found it impossible to conceal His presence from the population. There must have been something very striking and exceptional in the appearance of Christ, which rendered it useless for His disciples, however anxious they might be to secure for their Master a period of rest, to attempt to hide His identity from curious or observant people.

A Greek woman soon heard that Jesus was there; and being in distress about her young daughter, who is described as having an unclean spirit, she sought Him out and followed Him, crying: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." The fact is then recorded by St. Matthew (xv. 23) that Christ appeared to ignore the woman and made no answer to her. The disciples suggested sending her away; and Christ, as though acquiescing, said to them: "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He alluded, of course, to the fact that she was a Greek; and when the woman threw herself at His feet, reiterating her request for help, He replied to her: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs." Understanding the allusion to her nationality, she answered: "Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

And now Jesus gave utterance to the sympathy and compassion which—perhaps for the purpose of testing her belief—He had appeared to withhold. "O woman," He exclaimed, "great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." From

that hour the young girl was cured ; and when the mother arrived at her house, she found her daughter laid upon the bed, restored to health. This is, then, another instance of a miraculous cure, made by Christ without even seeing the patient, as a reward for the faith displayed by a third person.

On returning again to the Sea of Galilee a deaf man, who was also unable to articulate properly, was brought to Jesus. St. Mark, who alone narrates the incident, tells us that Jesus took him aside from the multitude to heal him. The circumstances of this cure are unusual. It is stated that Jesus put His fingers in the man's ears, that He spat, and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed and pronounced the single word " Ephphatha," which means " Be opened." Why the miracle was wrought by this process, we do not know. But the man was instantly cured : he heard and spoke plainly from that moment. The astonishment created by the event shows that the affliction must have been regarded as severe and incurable : and although Jesus told the people to tell no man about it, the news was spread about everywhere.

This violation of the secrecy which had been enjoined brought additional crowds from the neighbouring towns and villages ; and when Jesus and His disciples climbed a hill near by, the multitude followed them, bringing numbers of sick persons to be healed. Many of these people had been following Jesus about for three days and were by now exhausted for lack of food. Our Lord had

compassion on them. "I would not send them away fasting," He said to the disciples, "lest haply they faint in the way." The disciples objected: "Whence should we have so many loaves in a desert place, as to fill so great a multitude?"

Having ascertained that the provisions they had with them consisted of seven loaves and a few small fishes, Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground—four thousand men, on this occasion, besides women and children. Taking the seven loaves and the fishes, He then gave thanks, divided them, and gave them to His disciples. The portions were distributed by the disciples to the people. And when everybody had enjoyed a full meal, seven baskets were filled with the fragments that were left. It was a miracle in every respect resembling the feeding of the still larger number on a previous occasion. The facts are related both by St. Matthew and St. Mark. It cannot be doubted, unless doubt is also passed upon all the statements contained in those Gospels. The history of the world abounds in instances of masses of people, in every part of the globe, perishing for want of food. If it were in the power of human beings to provide miraculous supplies in relief of such famines, the power would often have been exercised. Christ alone is recorded to have fed multitudes by such means.

At Bethsaida, shortly after this event, a blind man was healed by Jesus, in much the same way as the deaf man whose case is recorded above. On this occasion, also, definite actions brought

about the cure. First we are told—by St. Mark, who alone records the incident—that Jesus took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town. Then He put spittle on the man's eyes, and laid His hands upon him. Having done this, He asked him if he could see anything. The man looked up and replied : “ I see men ; for I behold them as trees, walking.” This was, apparently, only a partial restoration of the man's eyesight. Jesus again placed His hands upon his eyes, and then made him look up again. This time the cure was complete, and the man was able to see every one clearly.

There is no mention of the blind man's faith as a factor in this extraordinary cure. The man did not appear to take the initiative. He was brought to Jesus by his friends, who besought the Saviour to touch him. It is clear that the friends had perfect faith in the power of Christ, which they had probably already seen manifested on some other occasion. But the man himself had seen nothing, being blind, and probably had no expectation that anybody would be able to restore his sight. When the simple means are considered by which Jesus effected this cure, the amazing nature of the miracle becomes apparent. The greatest oculists of to-day, with all their scientific knowledge and modern mechanical appliances, are only able to restore sight in certain exceptional cases—and then only by means of a most delicate and difficult operation, performed with finely tempered surgical instruments and requiring rare skill on the part of the operator.

Jesus Christ effected His cure without special instruments and without surgical training. It would be as much a miracle in Harley Street or Cavendish Square to-day as it was in Galilee nineteen hundred years ago.

## CHAPTER X

“Thou art the Christ.”

NO evidence of Christ's deity can be more convincing than His own words. In order to understand His claim to be the Son of God and the promised Messiah, and the recognition of this claim by His chosen disciples and others, it is necessary to go back to the day following that on which the five thousand were fed in a desert place. When the people found that Jesus and the disciples had gone away, they crossed the lake and found Him on the other side. Reading their hearts, Jesus said to them : “Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled. Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you : for him the Father, even God, hath sealed. . . . This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

They asked Him : “What then doest thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee ? What workest thou ? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness ; as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.”

Jesus replied : “It was not Moses that gave you

the bread out of heaven ; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world." And when they said : " Lord, evermore give us this bread," He answered : " I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. . . . I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. . . . For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day."

When the Jews murmured at these words, Jesus repeated them even more plainly and significantly. " He that believeth," He declared, " hath eternal life. I am the bread of life. . . . I am the living bread which came down out of heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever : yea, and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world."

It is stated by St. John, who records these words as having been uttered by Christ in the synagogue at Capernaum, that on hearing them many even of His disciples murmured at what was said, and from that time deserted Him and walked with Him no more. Aware of this, Jesus asked the Twelve : " Would ye also go away ? " The answer was given for them by Simon Peter. " Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God."

The other three Evangelists make no mention of this episode ; but they record another occasion, at a later date, when similar words were uttered by Peter. They relate that when Jesus was journeying with His disciples on the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, after the incident of healing the blind man given in the previous chapter, He asked them : " Who do men say that I am ? " They replied that some said He was John the Baptist ; some thought Him to be Elijah ; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Jesus then put the question to them : " But who say ye that I am ? " Again Peter answered for them all : " Thou art the Christ " ; and Matthew states that he added the words, " the Son of the living God."

This expression of opinion, recorded in all the Gospels, is of great evidential value. The true greatness of a man, as has often enough been pointed out, is seldom seen by those who are most intimate with him. Of all people, the severest judges and those least likely to lean towards over-estimation are those who see too much behind the scenes. It not only speaks for the majesty of Christ's character and personality, that His chosen friends recognized Him as the Son of God ; but it also offers an indirect proof of the actuality of the miracles He wrought, which must naturally have had great weight in convincing the disciples, in the early part of Christ's public ministry, that He was no ordinary man like themselves.

But it is impossible to overrate the importance

of the words used by Christ Himself. Knowing the beauty and simplicity of His character, and His unalterable adherence to the truth, the apostles could hardly have failed to be convinced, when they heard it from His own mouth, that He was in reality a divine Being. There is no ambiguity about the statements which have been quoted. Jesus speaks of God as "my Father." In figurative but simple language He declares: "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven." And when Peter, replying for the apostles, says: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus does not chide him for uttering blasphemy, but answers: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

If there were no more than this, it would be convincing enough testimony by itself. But it was followed by a prophetic declaration on the part of the Saviour which surely set the seal on His deity. Commanding His disciples to tell no one what had been revealed to them, He proceeded to foretell His death and resurrection. "The Son of man must suffer many things," He declared to them, "and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." This prophecy, uttered in confidence to the disciples for the purpose of preparing their minds for the tragic events to come, was made by Jesus two years before His crucifixion. What other man, in the history of the world, is recorded to have

foretold his death—let alone the accompanying circumstances—with absolute accuracy and conviction? And it is plain enough, from what followed at a future date, that Jesus deemed it inadvisable at this early stage of His ministry, although He knew everything that would befall Him, to let the disciples know exactly in what manner He would die. The blow at that time would have been too crushing; and they were not yet strong enough to bear it.

It was shortly after Peter's confession of faith that words were uttered by Jesus which are full of hope for the world coming from the Son of God, but which would be an incredible blasphemy in the mouth of an ordinary man. At the conclusion of a discourse to a number of people whom He had called together with His disciples, He said (Matt. xvi. 26, 27): "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds." This saying is recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels, with but insignificant variations in its actual wording. If the declaration is not evidence of Christ's consciousness of His divine relationship and exalted position, what can it be but the raving of a deluded religious fanatic? And who, after reading the record of Christ's life on earth, will allow to the latter alternative even a moment's consideration?

About this time also there occurred an incident, recorded only by St. John, which throws a significant light on the personality of our Lord. The Pharisees became alarmed at the growing numbers who believed in Jesus as the promised Messiah. With the concurrence of the chief priests they accordingly decided to take action and have Him arrested. To effect this purpose they dispatched officers with orders to take Him. But the officers returned from their errand empty-handed ; and when they were taken to task for not having executed their orders, and were questioned as to the cause of their failure to bring back Jesus, they excused themselves by replying : " Never man so spake." This was not the only occasion upon which the presence of Christ overwhelmed those who came to lay violent hands on Him. By the exercise of some potent influence, He escaped unharmed, more than once, when hostile crowds were pressing round Him and threatened His liberty of action.

It is not without precedent, of course, that commanding personalities have had an intimidating effect upon those who wished to harm them. But the terror they have inspired has mainly been due to a warning, conveyed by a flashing eye and determined attitude, that any violence would be the signal for prompt and drastic reprisals. In the case of Jesus, no such apprehension can have existed, His whole attitude towards life, shown by His daily works of compassion which had brought Him the adoration of the multitude, forbade any idea that physical violence was to be feared from Him. The

power He exercised was a purely moral force ; and although this alone cannot be taken as conclusive evidence of deity, it is certainly corroborative of what we would expect to find in One who was the Son of God.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TRANSFIGURATION

SOME days later a wonderful experience was accorded to three of the apostles, who were specially dear to Jesus, and whom He must have selected on that account to be with Him at the moment of His glorification. The chosen three were Simon Peter, and James and John, the two sons of Zebedee—important witnesses of a strange and marvellous occurrence, as to which they were to be enjoined to remain silent until after Christ's resurrection. All that the Gospels state is that Jesus went up into a high mountain to pray, taking these three disciples with Him. But it is certain that what happened was no fortuitous incident ; that Jesus climbed the mountain with a specific purpose ; and that He chose His witnesses deliberately, both with the object of strengthening their faith in Him at a crucial moment, and in order that the great event which was about to happen should receive unimpeachable testimony before the world.

The details of the ascent are not given, nor is the name of the mountain. But it has been generally assumed, on sufficiently good grounds, that Mount Hermon, which lies to the north of Cæsarea

Philippi where Jesus had been sojourning six days before, was the scene of the Transfiguration. In all probability, however, the ascent was made in the evening, as St. Luke, whose account is the most detailed in the three Synoptic Gospels, refers to their coming down "on the next day." As it is clear, from the version given by St. Luke, that the disciples did not witness the beginning of the Transfiguration, it may be supposed that they slept for some time on the top of the mountain whilst Jesus went apart from them to pray.

Our Lord was now about to enter upon a critical period of His public ministry, when the full hostility of the Scribes and Pharisees would be roused against Him. Already He had hinted to the disciples that a shameful death would terminate His earthly career, and He had before Him the task of preparing them still further to meet the shock of coming events. They had not yet taken in the significance of His prophecy concerning Himself, and their faith had to be strengthened before they would be fit to learn the exact nature of the fate which awaited Him. With this special object in view, Jesus must have selected His three most intimate and reliable companions to witness a scene of which the memory would sustain them in the darkest hour of humiliation and defeat. And He Himself, knowing that He was about to face an ordeal that would become more tremendous from day to day, needed spiritual ministrations which could only come from the source of all light and truth.

Whether Peter and his companions were roused

from their sleep by the sound of voices, or by the brilliant radiance cast around them, is not stated. But they awoke to find Christ, transformed into a glorious and dazzling figure, in communion with two other spiritual beings. That they merely hazarded a guess at the identity of these two communicants from another world is not to be thought of. If Jesus said nothing at the moment, the disciples had ample opportunity to question Him on the subject afterwards. The positive statement in the Synoptic Gospels, therefore, that Christ was seen talking with Moses and Elijah, must have rested upon a much firmer foundation than conjecture. Moses represented the law; and Elijah the prophets. There must have been a great significance in this communion, on the part of Jesus, with the representatives of the old order to which the Jews clung with such persistence. Henceforward a new spirit was to be breathed into the entire relationship between God and mankind; and it serves to clear away much of the mystery, which must naturally surround such an event as the Transfiguration on Mount Hermon, to reflect how fitting it was—and how significant of the changing of the old order—that this meeting should have taken place between those who symbolized the three great spiritual forces at work in the world: the law, the prophets, and the new revelation.

They spoke also, it appears, of Christ's coming death at Jerusalem; though whether the three disciples actually overheard what was said, or ascertained it afterwards from their Master, cannot

be known. But Peter, intervening with his characteristic impetuosity, proposed to Jesus that they should remain on the mountain and make three tabernacles—one for Him, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. He spoke without thinking ; and whilst he was uttering this hasty suggestion, a cloud came and overshadowed them all. St. Matthew says it was a bright cloud. And out of the cloud came a voice which said : “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased : hear ye him.” This voice from heaven made a deeper and more lasting impression even than the wonderful spectacle of the transfigured Christ. Upon hearing it, the disciples were seized with panic and fell down upon their faces ; and in this position they remained until Jesus came and touched them, saying : “ Arise, and be not afraid.” His touch restored their courage, and looking up they saw that He was alone.

Of the three apostles who witnessed the Transfiguration, two have borne direct testimony to its occurrence. The fact that James, the son of Zebedee and elder brother of John, does not appear as a witness on his own account is capable of simple explanation. It would have been remarkable indeed if such a wonderful experience had made no abiding impression on one of those who were privileged to undergo it. In the first place, the New Testament contains no writing by St. John's brother ; the author of the epistle being, of course, James the Less, who was the brother or kinsman of our Lord. And, secondly, he was first among the

apostles to earn the crown of martyrdom, through which his career was cut short—possibly with the result of depriving the world of his written testimony.

Both St. John and St. Peter, however, have made references to the scene, which, throughout their lives, must have been constantly before their eyes. In his Gospel St. John writes (i. 14): "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." The words "we beheld his glory," clearly point to the Transfiguration on Mount Hermon. Again, the verse at the commencement of St. John's first Epistle appears to allude to the same episode. "That which was from the beginning," he writes, "that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life." Although somewhat obscure, this has been taken to contain an allusion to the Transfiguration. But it should be remembered that this epistle was probably written at Ephesus when St. John was an old man. He had recounted his wonderful experience many times, and intended to make only a distant allusion to an incident which every Christian already knew him to have witnessed.

St. Peter is more explicit. In addition to the generally accepted fact that he inspired the accounts given in the Synoptic Gospels, he adds his own testimony in his second Epistle (i. 15-18): "I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after

my decease to call these things to remembrance. For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased : and this voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount."

The voice—which must, indeed, have been recognized as the voice of God—produced an indelible effect upon the mind of Peter, who makes it the outstanding feature of his later recollection. But they all heard it ; and they all saw Jesus in His glorious exaltation accompanied by Moses and Elijah. No such experience has ever been accorded to any one else in the history of the world. It is comparable, perhaps, with those vouchsafed to Moses, when he was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. But Moses was an active participant, not a mere spectator. The three apostles were selected to be witnesses of the glorification of Christ : to place the fact of His divine relationship beyond dispute ; and to strengthen their own faith sufficiently to carry them through the terrible trials to come.

## CHAPTER XII

“ Before Abraham was, I am.”

WHEN Jesus came down from the mountain He found a great multitude of people surrounding the disciples whom He had not taken with Him. They were being cross-questioned by the Scribes, and numbers were pressing forward to get within earshot of the disputation. But directly Jesus appeared, all the people were struck with astonishment when they saw Him, and ran towards Him in salutation. The Transfiguration must have left upon Christ's countenance traces of the glorious radiance by which it had been accompanied, for St. Mark makes special mention of the effect produced upon the crowds when they gazed upon Him.

The cause of the Scribes' questioning, about which Jesus immediately inquired, appears to have been the failure of the disciples, during His absence on the mountain, to cast a spirit out of an afflicted boy. The father of this poor creature, who was dumb and suffered from violent fits, came at once to Jesus and explained the whole of the matter to Him, giving a pitiable account of the child's disorder. It occasioned an unusual outburst of indignation on the part of our Lord, due, it must be supposed, to the lack of faith displayed by the

disciples in dealing with the case. When the boy was brought to Him, he fell down foaming at the mouth. In answer to a question from Jesus, the father gave an account of his son's disorder. He concluded with the petition: "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus may have smiled at those words, as He repeated, "If thou canst!" adding: "All things are possible to him that believeth." This brought from the father, overcome with emotion, the words, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Without further delay, to avoid the pressure of the gathering crowds, Jesus cast out the evil spirit. The boy was so prostrated by the process of healing that the surrounding people declared him to be dead. But our Lord simply took him by the hand, and raised him up from the ground, restoring him to his father fully cured.

Afterwards, when the disciples questioned Him about their failure in this case, Jesus answered them: "This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer." And St. Matthew records also that upon this occasion He uttered the memorable saying: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Directly after this event, which made an immense impression upon all who were present, Jesus again foretold to the disciples His coming death and resurrection. He told them in plain language:

“The Son of man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he shall rise again.” But this tragic sequel was so far removed from their hopes and expectations that, although troubled in their minds about those prophetic words now uttered to them for the second time, they were still unable to grasp their significance. Only a few days before the Transfiguration on Mount Hermon Jesus had warned them of His coming fate. Other such warnings were still to come. It would be difficult, in view of the accepted good faith of the Evangelists, to disbelieve in the fact of one such uttered prophecy; but it would be contrary to all reasonable procedure to reject the evidence of repeated statements.

The incident relating to the temple tribute money, which is given only by St. Matthew, has been described as the most difficult of all the miracles to understand. But was it a miracle at all, and intended to be taken as such by the narrator? It is, in any case, an unfinished story. St. Matthew states that when they had come to Capernaum, after our Lord's prophecy concerning His death, the collectors of the half shekel which was paid by every Jew over the age of nineteen as a contribution to the temple service at Jerusalem, visited Peter. Their object was to inquire whether Jesus would not pay the tax, and Peter promptly assured them that He would. When Peter came to report the matter, however, Jesus forestalled him by asking: “What thinkest thou, Simon? the kings

of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons or from strangers?" Peter replied: "From strangers."

Jesus then said to him: "Therefore the sons are free. But, lest we cause them to stumble, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a shekel: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." There the account stops, and nothing further is related of the matter. That such a miracle was possible to Christ could not be doubted by those who believe that He healed lepers, restored sight to the blind, multiplied bread, and stilled the tempest.

The alternative to be accepted seems to be that Jesus, smiling at Peter's dilemma and at the hasty pledge he had given on His master's behalf, intended to imply that His disciple should go, as they possessed no money, and earn by fishing the money necessary to redeem his promise. It is hard, otherwise, to understand why St. Matthew failed also to record that a fish was actually caught and a shekel discovered in its mouth. The main difficulty, of course, lies in the words which St. Matthew reports Jesus to have uttered. In the mouth of anybody else they would readily be construed to have been intentionally humorous. It is surely not wanting in reverence to suppose that our Lord may have intended His speech, even as recorded, in a similar spirit.

At this time Jesus was living in Galilee, as the

Jews were plotting to kill Him. But He went up to Jerusalem several times and taught openly in the temple. It was on one of these occasions that the Scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman taken in adultery, in the hope of laying a trap to embarrass Him, but succeeded only in being themselves profoundly humiliated. The event was followed by a discourse, or series of discourses, in the course of which unforgettable words were used by Him, the significance and meaning of which, infuriating as they were to the Jews, clearly established His own claim to deity. The record is taken from the eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel.

"I am the light of the world," Jesus declared. "He that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." Here the Pharisees, who were listening to His teaching in the temple, interrupted with the gibe: "Thou bearest witness of thyself; thy witness is not true." But Jesus went on: "Even if I bear witness of myself, my witness is true; for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye know not whence I come, or whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. Yea and if I judge, my judgement is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. Yea and in your law it is written, that the witness of two men is true. I am he that beareth witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." Again the Pharisees interposed: "Where is thy Father?" To which Jesus answered: "Ye know neither me nor my

Father : if ye knew me, ye would know my Father also."

In the face of these words, whose very nature is a guarantee of their truthful reproduction, it is difficult to understand how any one who admits the sincerity of St. John, and does not dispute the authenticity of the Gospel attributed to him, can fail to believe in the deity of Christ. Here is Jesus Himself pointing out the value of His own evidence, corroborated—even in accordance with the Jewish law—by the evidence given by God through the wonderful works wrought by Jesus on earth. We have to be spiritually blind, one would think, to read these words and to fail to perceive their application to the case of many half-hearted Christians living to-day.

When the Jews continued to dispute with Him, asserting themselves with insolence, Jesus again made the plain declaration : " If God were your Father, ye would love me : for I came forth and am come from God ; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me."

But more significant words were to come. The Jews—provoked by Jesus saying, " If a man keep my word, he shall never see death"—burst out angrily : " Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets ; and thou sayest, If a man keep my word, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead ? and the prophets are dead : whom makest thou thyself ? "

To this Jesus replied : " If I glorify myself, my

glory is nothing : it is my Father that glorifieth me ; of whom ye say, that he is your God ; and ye have not known him : but I know him ; and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be like unto you, a liar : but I know him, and keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; and he saw it, and was glad."

"Thou art not yet fifty years old," exclaimed the Jews, "and hast thou seen Abraham?" The answer of Christ to this challenge came with overwhelming directness :

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

He had spoken unmistakable words. Either He was a divine Being, consciously above the limitations of time and space—or He had sought to exalt Himself by a terrible blasphemy. The Jews who heard Him did not hesitate. Their minds were too encrusted with religious prejudice to be able to see God when He revealed Himself. In their blind and tragic anger they took up stones to cast at Him.

Then occurred another of those miracles that might have been a warning to saner and more simple-minded men. Jesus, at this critical moment when His life was endangered, disappeared from their midst and went out of the temple. How it happened, no one could tell. St. John states simply : "Jesus hid himself ;" or, as alternatively rendered : "Jesus was hidden." It is the same thing. First our Lord proclaimed Himself as a divine Spirit in existence before the days of

Abraham. And then, when this startling revelation put His earthly life in jeopardy before the appointed time, He was removed from danger by means entirely out of reach of the ordinary human being.

## CHAPTER XIII

“ He it is that speaketh with thee.”

AN argument amongst the disciples of Jesus gave occasion at this time for a discourse which might well be taken as a warning to future generations. The language used by our Lord, in teaching the beautiful lesson recorded by St. Matthew (xviii.), St. Mark (ix.), and St. Luke (ix.), could only have been uttered by One conscious of His exalted spiritual position. According to St. Luke, whose record of events is generally accepted as containing the best historical sequence, this discourse took place on the day following the Transfiguration. As they went along towards Capernaum, the disciples beguiled the way by indulging in an animated philosophical discussion. Apparently, Jesus took no notice of what they were saying ; but, when they had all arrived at their destination, He asked them what had been the subject of their conversation.

They were naturally ashamed to acknowledge that they had been arguing who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. But their thoughts could not be hidden from their Master ; and He answered them, in spite of their silence. Beckoning or calling to a little child, Jesus set it in the midst of them. How well one can picture

the scene ! The confiding child, too young to be self-conscious, wondering what it was all about, but contented and happy with the divine arm of Christ encircling its little body. Our Lord, His tenderness for the child only equalled by His tenderness with the pathetic ignorance of His followers, caressing the little one whilst He uttered words of the deepest wisdom. The disciples, touched and perhaps humiliated, listening eagerly—breathlessly—to catch the meaning of the sublime truths that fell from His lips.

The words Jesus uttered on this occasion cannot be passed by. They must ever be before the eyes of all who wish to believe, and to found their belief upon the truth. “Except ye turn, and become as little children,” He declared to the disciples (St. Matthew xviii.), “ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven . . . And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me : but whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling ! for it must needs be that the occasions come ; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh ! . . . See that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. How think ye ? if any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and

nine, and go into the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

The three Synoptists wrote their Gospels independently of one another; and it has been noted that, although the incidents related by them often differ in their actual details, there is a remarkable similarity in their reproduction of the sayings and discourses of our Lord Himself. This has been taken as significant of the care with which the words of Jesus Christ were preserved by those who heard them and passed them on to future generations. The fact that St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke—with but slight grammatical variation—all record Jesus as saying: "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me," satisfactorily establishes its authenticity. Exquisitely beautiful words in the mouth of a divine Redeemer, to be recognized as the Son of God; but terribly arrogant and blasphemous if uttered by the most saintly of ordinary mortals! Believing them to have been spoken by Jesus, who would dare to doubt His identity and divine power? Could any miracle wrought by Him on earth establish more clearly the nature of His relationship to God?

Still stronger testimony follows, nevertheless, both by word and deed. Excepting the raising of Lazarus, there is no miracle more amazing, and no

action of our Lord more convincing in its proof of His deity, than the episode now recorded by St. John (ix.). Passing along the streets of Jerusalem with His disciples, after the escape from the temple, Jesus encountered a man who had been blind from his birth. Always anxious to profit by the occasion, the disciples put this question : " Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind ? " Jesus answered : " Neither did this man sin, nor his parents : but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." This was intended, no doubt, to be taken in a general sense. The compensations often afforded to—if not always, indeed, within the reach of—afflicted individuals is universally in evidence. They are, sometimes, the most constantly cheerful people in the community.

Jesus went on to say : " We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh when no man can work. When I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Having spoken these words, He spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, and anointed the blind man's eyes with the clay. Commanded to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, a little distance from the city, the blind man did as Jesus had bidden him ; and when he had washed, his sight was restored. But the incident did not end here. Such an astonishing occurrence as the cure of a man who had actually been blind the whole of his life naturally caused an intensity of speculation and doubt. The man's neighbours recognized him when they

saw him with his eyes opened ; but some questioned the possibility of his identity, and declared that, although a likeness existed, it could not be he. But when they questioned him, he declared himself to be the former blind beggar whom they had seen and known. They asked him in astonishment how his sight had been restored, and he told them circumstantially how Jesus had effected the cure.

The next thing that happened was that the man was brought to some of the Pharisees, and the extraordinary incident reported to them. After the method of the cure had been explained, the Pharisees at once seized upon the fact that the good deed had been done on the Sabbath. A quarrel arose amongst them. Some declared, " This man is not from God, because he keepeth not the sabbath " ; whilst others said, " How can a man that is a sinner do such signs ? " The blind man himself, when the question was put to him, declared his belief that Jesus was a prophet. Driven back to the hope that the man had not really been blind and was an impostor, the Jews sent for his parents and proceeded to cross-examine them on the subject. But they took fright, knowing that the penalty of confessing Jesus to be the Christ would be to be expelled from the synagogue. They therefore contented themselves with saying : " We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind : but how he now seeth, we know not : or who opened his eyes, we know not : ask him ; he is of age ; he shall speak for himself."

When, upon this, the Jews called the blind man again and questioned him more closely, he became bolder and more assertive. He declined to discuss whether Jesus was a sinner or not. "One thing I know," he maintained stoutly, "that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Asked again to state how the cure had been effected, he lost his temper. "I told you even now," he answered, "and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? would ye also become his disciples?" This sarcasm exasperated the Pharisees, who were heckling him in the vain endeavour to get hold of something which they could use against Jesus. "Thou art his disciple," they cried; "but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God hath spoken unto Moses: but as for this man, we know not whence he is."

Thoroughly aroused and exasperated in his turn, the blind man turned upon his tormentors and made a courageous declaration of his faith.

"Why, herein is the marvel," he retorted, "that ye knew not whence he is, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth. Since the world began it was never heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." Enraged by this declaration, made impertinently in their presence by an ignorant man of the humblest class, the Jews denounced him in fury: "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" and cast him out.

And now came the wonderful and touching climax to this episode, which means so much to those that seek the truth and are simple-minded enough to accept it when the evidence is placed before them. Jesus, hearing that the man whose sight He had restored had been treated by the Pharisees in this fashion, sought him out. He must have known exactly what had passed at that interview, and have determined to reward the man for his gratitude and faith. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He asked, when He had found him. The man answered: "And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?"

"Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee."

Clearly and in unmistakable terms Jesus had again testified to His deity.

But further and even more convincing testimony was to come. Exclaiming: "Lord, I believe," the blind man is recorded to have worshipped Jesus. That is to say, he went down on his knees at the feet of the Saviour and gave Him the complete homage and worship which are rendered to God alone. But it is not the attitude of this poor and ignorant man which is the crowning evidence here of the deity of Christ. It is the attitude of our Lord Himself. In one of the visions narrated by St. John in Revelations, he records (xix. 10) how he was reproved by an angel because he fell down before his feet to worship him. "See thou do it not," said the angel: "I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony

of Jesus : worship God : for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." No such rebuke was administered by our Lord to the blind man. He took occasion, on the contrary, to utter words still more significant of His personality and power.

"For judgement came I into this world," He declared, "that they which see not may see ; and that they which see may become blind."

Some Pharisees, who were present and must have witnessed the act of worship, asked uneasily : "Are we also blind ?" And Jesus answered them : "If ye were blind, ye would have no sin : but now ye say, We see : your sin remaineth."

## CHAPTER XIV

“ I and the Father are one.”

CONTINUING His discourse to the Pharisees, after the episode of the blind man, Jesus said (St. John x.) : “ He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. . . . I am the door of the sheep. All that came before me are thieves and robbers : but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture. The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy : I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

“ I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. . . . I am the good shepherd ; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father ; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd. Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me,

but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father."

The Jews to whom these words were addressed were mystified by them. They disputed hotly amongst themselves about the personality of Jesus. The more bigoted fell back upon the declaration that Jesus was mad and therefore ought not to be listened to. But others, less spiritually dense and more open-minded, were deeply impressed by His words and actions. "These are not the sayings of one possessed with a devil," they retorted. "Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

The proclamation of Jesus that He was the door to salvation was an assumption that could not have been made by an ordinary man. It carries with it the conviction of His divine origin and destiny, even if detached from the prophetic utterance which followed—but which was not then understood—about the laying down of His life, and taking it up again. One has only to reflect what it would be if the most saintly and respected man living declared himself, and belief in him, to be the only way to salvation, in order to realize the impossibility of any but God or His equal uttering the words which came from the mouth of Jesus.

It was at this time that our Lord sent out the seventy disciples to prepare the way in the places which He was about to visit; and He concluded His instructions with the words: "He that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me." In any one else the use of the personal pronoun would be

arrogant presumption. No missionary of to-day would dare to utter such a phrase. If he said anything at all like it, he would say: "He that rejects my message"; and he would certainly be diffident about suggesting that God Himself had sent him. And it may also be pointed out that, however convinced the Evangelists might be of the deity of Christ, they would be the last persons to invent words in proof of it which our Lord never used. Nor can one conceive of any writer—allowing for the sake of argument, for instance, that the Gospel attributed to St. John was never written by him at all—being capable of imagining the words and phrases attributed to Jesus which contain this implication. One is at any rate on safe literary ground in making such an assertion, which would surely be upheld, not only by every capable scholar, but by any man of intelligence whose judgment has not been warped by prejudice.

When the seventy returned, and reported: "Lord, even the devils are subject to us in thy name," Jesus again used words (St. Luke x. 18-20) which would be the ravings of a megalomaniac in the mouth of any one but the Son of God.

"I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven," He declared to them. "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you. Howbeit in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

And rejoicing in that same hour in the Holy

Spirit, as St. Luke puts it, He said : " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes : Yea, Father ; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father : and no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father ; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."

Then, having uttered this prayer, Jesus turned to His disciples and said to them privately : " Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see : for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not ; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not."

It is impossible to miss the implication of these concluding words, addressed by our Lord in confidence to His disciples. If Napoleon had told his generals that they were fortunate in having the advantage of living in the presence of his military genius, he would have been handed down in history as a man of unexampled conceit. The humility of Christ has been held up as an example to the world for nineteen centuries : Could He have spoken the words recorded by St. Luke if He had not been the equal of God ?

A miraculous cure on the Sabbath, which occurred at this time, brought about another curious instance of the Pharisees' stubborn-mindedness. The incident is related only by St. Luke (xiii. 11-17).

When Jesus was teaching one day in the synagogue, He saw amongst the congregation a poor sufferer from some incurable rheumatic complaint—not an uncommon sight to-day—whose figure was completely bowed together by the stiffness of her joints. This pitiable object immediately roused the compassion of our Lord. He called the woman to Him, and said to her : “ Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.” And, as Jesus pronounced these words, He laid His hands upon her. In that moment the woman, who had been in this unhappy condition for eighteen years, was made straight ; and her first act, upon finding herself released from her terrible infirmity, was to glorify God.

This touching scene, instead of inspiring him with awe and gratitude on account of this wonderful act of mercy and divine power, filled the ruler of the synagogue with indignation. Angrily addressing himself to those who were present, he cried : “ There are six days in which men ought to work : in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the sabbath.”

It would be difficult to conceive a more brutal and insolent outburst, provoked by a work of charity which might well have appealed to the hardest-hearted ruffian. It was one of those callous exhibitions of blind bigotry and hatred which provoked our Lord, with all His unexampled patience with the ignorance and perverseness of human nature, to anger. “ Ye hypocrites,” He exclaimed, “ doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and

lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years, to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the sabbath?"

St. Luke records that His adversaries were put to shame by these words, and that all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him. The mass of ignorant people had recognized at once that such a deed as the one they had just witnessed was in the power of God alone. It was only the educated and learned Pharisee who remained blind to the manifestation of Christ's deity.

The feast of the dedication was now due to take place at Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's porch. The Jews thought it a good opportunity to provoke Him to some admission that could be used against Him. They clustered round Him, therefore, and tried the effect of a direct question.

"How long dost thou hold us in suspense?" they asked. "If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly."

Although Jesus answered them indirectly, there was all the implication of an affirmative in His reply (St. John x. 25-30): "I told you, and ye believe not: the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they

shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, which hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. "I and the Father are one," Jesus declared in conclusion.

These words—upon which the whole Christian faith might well be founded—were a signal for an outbreak of violence on the part of the Jews who heard them. Besotted with their own cast-iron views on God and religion, the assumption—perhaps even the suspicion—that Jesus was divine and ranked far above them all, with its implication that His teaching was right and their own hopelessly wrong, always drove them mad with rage. They picked up stones to hurl at Him.

For a few moments He held them back from their purpose. With the stones in their sacrilegious hands, they paused, overawed.

In quiet tones Jesus addressed them.

"Many good works have I shewed you from the Father," He said; "for which of those works do ye stone me?"

The answer of the Jews displayed their unbelief. "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

Jesus replied: "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest;

because I said, I am the Son of God ? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works : that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

Their hostility was now to be restrained no longer. Determined upon violence, they sought at once to take Him by force. But not one of them was able to lay hands on our Lord. "He went forth out of their hand," is the simple record made by St. John. Yet it would have been easy enough to arrest, or to maltreat, any ordinary person in such circumstances. How, then, did Jesus pass unharmed through the midst of His enemies, who were bent upon doing Him some mischief ? Upon each occasion that He was threatened, before the time had come when He was to suffer Himself to be taken and put to death, He was unaccountably removed from the scene of danger.

## CHAPTER XV

“Lazarus, come forth !”

TO escape from Jewish violence Jesus went across the Jordan into Peræa, to the place where John the Baptist had been active in preparing the way for Him. There He found not only safety from the persecution of His enemies, but acceptance amongst the people. John had not spoken in vain. Not only were his words concerning Christ remembered, but believed. He had, it is true, worked no miracles ; but all the things that he had said of our Lord, they declared, were true. Hence, as St. John the Evangelist testifies, “many believed on him there.”

It was there that an urgent message was sent to Jesus by Mary and her sister Martha from the village of Bethany. It concerned their brother Lazarus, who had suddenly been taken ill. The message was brief and touchingly worded : “Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.” Jesus had spent many happy days at their house in Bethany. The family lived in comfortable circumstances, and were much respected. It was in their house that Mary afterwards anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair ; and it is stated by St. John (xi.) that He “loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” When the message was

delivered to Him, Jesus spoke mysterious words. "This sickness is not unto death," He said, "but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." Whether or not any answer was returned by the messenger is not recorded. The sequel suggests that no immediate reply was sent ; and probably the messenger, being expected to take Jesus back with him to Bethany, remained there to await His consent to undertake the journey. Jesus did not, in fact, respond at once to the urgent summons.

He continued to abide in Peræa for two days after the event. But, meanwhile, certain Pharisees came to warn Him to depart, declaring that Herod was seeking to kill Him. The warning was acted upon, probably because it coincided with the plans which Jesus had Himself formed. And the words in which our Lord replied to the exhortations of the Pharisees will always be remembered for the unexampled beauty of their thought and expression. The first sentences contain a vein of sarcasm rarely to be found in the utterances of Jesus, and only employed by Him in moments of unusual indignation. "Go and say to that fox," He answered them (St. Luke xiii. 32) : "Behold I cast out devils and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected. Howbeit, I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following : for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

Then, overcome with sorrow at the thought of what might have been, Jesus exclaimed :

“ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her ! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate : and I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

At this time another work of mercy was performed on the Sabbath. Jesus had gone into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread, and he saw there—presumably amongst the unbidden partakers of oriental hospitality—a man afflicted with the dropsy. The Pharisees were, as usual, watching Him closely for any slip that they might turn to profit. Knowing this, Jesus put to them the simple question : “ Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath or not ? ” Neither the Pharisees nor the lawyers who were present could find an answer. In the silence that ensued, Jesus took the man and healed him. Then, turning again to the hostile faces of those who surrounded Him, He remarked : “ Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on a sabbath day ? ” They may well have anticipated that this was coming, for it was not the first time that Jesus had used this argument to point out to the Jews the hypocrisy of their attitude. And again the question was followed by silence. But the glory of our Lord's act of mercy may well, of itself, have stricken them with dumbness ; for no man on earth could stretch

out his hand and heal an incurable sickness which has continued to baffle the skill of medical science for centuries.

Two days after Jesus had received the message from Bethany, He said to the disciples : " Let us go into Judæa again." When the disciples pointed out the danger of going back to the place where the Jews had just been seeking to stone Him, He replied : " Are there not twelve hours in the day ? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him."

Then He added the true reason that was the motive for this perilous journey. " Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." Jesus knew that Lazarus had died, and He was in reality speaking of his death. But the disciples did not understand this ; they thought that He was only speaking of taking rest in sleep.

Jesus, perceiving this, spoke out plainly : " Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe ; nevertheless let us go unto him." Upon hearing this, the disciples no longer tried to dissuade Him from His purpose. But they feared the worst ; and Thomas, who was called Didymus, proposed to his fellow-disciples that they should all go too, and die with Him.

When they arrived in the neighbourhood of Bethany, Lazarus had already been buried for four

days. The family possessed many friends in Jerusalem ; and a number of the Jews had come out to the house of mourning at Bethany, for the purpose of paying visits of condolence. Martha, when she heard that Jesus was approaching, was the first to go out and meet Him. She must have come to Him in deep tribulation, for her first words were words of despair: " Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now," she added, her faith reviving in His presence, " I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee."

Jesus must have been greatly moved by this first contact with the grief of the family, and He hastened to speak words of consolation and reassurance :

" Thy brother shall rise again."

It did not occur to Martha to accept this promise in any but a general sense. " I know," she replied, " that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus forebore to elucidate His meaning and intention at that moment, but spoke to her the words of hope and promise which are the consolation of all mourners at a Christian burial: " I am the resurrection, and the life : he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this ? " •

Martha gave the answer which everybody must give who believes that those words were uttered by our Lord, and who reflects on their significance.

"Yea, Lord," was her reply: "I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world."

Having said this, Martha went away and returned to her house, where Mary was receiving the condolences of their Jewish visitors. Speaking privately to her sister, Martha informed her that Jesus was there and was calling for her. Upon hearing this, Mary at once left the house to go to Him; and the Jews who had been trying to comfort her, seeing her go out and supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there, followed her. Jesus was still outside the village, at the place where Martha had talked with Him. He saw Mary coming to greet Him with the crowd of mourners. It was a moment of overwhelming sorrow. When Mary reached the spot where Jesus stood, she fell down at His feet, and the cry came from her heart, as from her sister's: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

Although He knew what was to come, Jesus could not witness this agony of grief unmoved. It is recorded by St. John that when He saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said: "Where have ye laid him?" When they answered: "Come and see," Jesus wept. The Jews, witnessing His grief, exclaimed: "Behold, how he loved him!" But some of them said: "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die?"

On the way to the tomb, which consisted of a cave with a stone laid against it, Jesus was again deeply stirred by the spectacle of their sorrow. Arrived at the mouth of the cave, He commanded : " Take ye away the stone." Then Martha, interposing, said : " Lord, by this time he stinketh : for he hath been dead four days." But Jesus answered her with gentle reproach : " Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldst see the glory of God ? "

In obedience to His wish, they removed the stone. The grave was opened ; and Jesus stood upon the threshold. It was a solemn moment ; and all manifestations of grief must have been hushed as the group of mourners stood there in wondering anticipation.

Then Jesus, lifting up His eyes, said : " Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me. And I know that thou hearest me always : but because of the multitude which standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me."

Having uttered this short prayer, Jesus cried with a loud voice :

" Lazarus, come forth ! "

Who could attempt to depict the scene that followed ? Those standing with Jesus at the mouth of the tomb must have been shaken to the depths of their being at the sound of this awful command. Would it—could it—be obeyed ? With terror-stricken eyes, trembling in every limb, they gazed into the darkness of the cave.

And then the terrible, awe-inspiring sight met

them. Lazarus came out from the grave, where he had lain, a dead man, for four days, still bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face bound about with a napkin. And whilst they gazed, spellbound, at this frightful spectacle, came the calm voice of Jesus :

“ Loose him, and let him go.”

It was made abundantly clear, by our Lord Himself, that the raising of Lazarus from the dead was a miracle, deliberately performed, for the purpose of establishing beyond any possibility of doubt that His power came from God, and that His works on earth were intended as a proof of His deity and divine mission. We have Christ's own word for the fact that Lazarus was actually dead, in addition to the stated fact that he was buried for four days before his spirit was brought back by the divine command.

Some of those who witnessed the miracle lost no time in reporting it on their return to Jerusalem. Thereupon the chief priests and Pharisees called together a council ; and, on the incredible ground that all men would believe on Jesus after the many signs He had given, if they failed to take measures to prevent it, they resolved from that day to find means to put Him to death.

## CHAPTER XVI

“ To mock, and to scourge, and to crucify.”

**I**N view of the dangerous situation that had developed, Jesus left Judæa and went to the city of Ephraim on the borders of Samaria. And there He remained for a while with the disciples. Then He set out, through Samaria and Galilee, on His last journey to Jerusalem.

On the way, as He was entering into a village, the name of which is not recorded, He saw ten lepers who had obviously come out from the place to which they had been banished in accordance with Jewish law and custom, for the purpose of placing themselves in His way. This miserable group of outcasts, when they perceived Jesus approaching, raised their voices and uttered the pitiable cry : “ Jesus, Master, have mercy on us ! ” To such a prayer, coming plainly from the hearts of those who believed on Him and His divine power to heal even the most incurable of human diseases, our Lord never turned a deaf ear. Without even approaching them, by the mere exercise of His mysterious prerogative of mercy, Jesus granted their petition. “ Go and shew yourselves unto the priests,” He cried out to them. And as they obeyed the command they were cleansed of their leprosy.

One of them, on discovering that he had been miraculously healed in that moment, turned back immediately, glorifying God, and fell upon his face at the feet of Jesus. He was not a Jew, but a Samaritan. Incredible as it may seem—though such is human nature—the rest of them had gone off without troubling to stop and express their gratitude. “Were not the ten cleansed?” asked Jesus; “but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?”

This miracle is recorded by St. Luke (xvii. 11–19). The cleansing of a whole group of leper outcasts, merely by word of mouth, is one of the most amazing incidents contained in the four Gospels. As evidence of a divine power altogether outside the experience of what is ordinarily known as faith-healing, it cannot be set aside. Those who wish to deny it as a miracle must discredit St. Luke as a trustworthy historian and say it never happened. But if this is said of one miracle, it might as well be said of all; and with this assumption the credit of the Gospels—to say nothing of the Epistles—would be gone. It is all, or nothing. There is, as already stated, no half-way of belief.

It is immediately after the account of this miracle that St. Luke records Jesus Christ's first intimation of the circumstances in which His second advent would take place. The Pharisees had asked Him when the kingdom of God would come; and He had replied briefly to their question: “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither

shall they say, Lo, here ! or, There ! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you." But to His disciples He uttered a prophetic warning, which was to be amplified by Him not long afterwards, when He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the events that would characterize the last days before the final judgment.

"The days will come," Jesus declared to them, "when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, Lo, there ! Lo, here ! go not away, nor follow after them : for as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of the one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven ; so shall the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation. And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot ; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded ; but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all : after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away : and let him that is in the field likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever

shall seek to gain his life shall lose it : but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I say unto you, In that night there shall be two men on one bed ; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. There shall be two women grinding together ; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left."

The disciples asked : " Where, Lord ? " And Jesus answered : " Where the body is, thither will the eagles also be gathered together."

It may be regarded as uncertain whether these words do not belong to the later discourse, referred to above, in which Jesus replied, almost on the eve of His betrayal and death, to the disciples' question, " When shall these things be ? " They are given here, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. Luke, because nobody can read them, and take in their sense, without perceiving that the authority and prophetic vision displayed by Him who uttered them are beyond the limitations imposed upon human beings. Who could have spoken with this certainty about the things hidden from our earthly knowledge but God, or the Son of God ?

And now, on this last journey to Jerusalem, which was to culminate in the tragedy that has been mourned throughout Christendom for nineteen centuries, Jesus confided to the disciples the one terrible detail concerning His betrayal and death which He had hitherto deemed it wise to conceal from them. As they went along on their way, Jesus took the twelve apostles apart, and told them, for the third time, but without reservation, the appalling fate that awaited the Saviour of mankind.

“Behold, we go up to Jerusalem,” He declared (St. Matthew xx. 18); “and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, *and to crucify*: and the third day he shall be raised up.”

This complete prophecy was uttered by Jesus during the week that preceded the one on which His trial and crucifixion took place. Twice before He had warned them that He would suffer death at the hands of men, and would rise again the third day; but they had not understood Him. Even now, when Jesus took them further into His confidence and prepared them for the worst blow that would befall them in the near future, they failed to grasp that they were intended to take His meaning literally. But His words were remembered. They remain a witness to the deity of Christ, who knew all the details of His betrayal, condemnation, and execution long before they were thought of or decided upon by the chief actors in the terrible drama.

It must have come as a bitter reflection to some of the disciples, afterwards, that, in this hour when the tragic disclosure was made to them by their Lord, two of their number approached Jesus with the request that they might be chosen to sit, one on His right hand, and the other on His left hand, in His glory. By this they appeared to mean the kingdom He was about to establish, as they thought, upon earth. It is again significant that Jesus accepted the statement about Himself and did not

rebuke them for making it. His answer contained quite a different implication. "To sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give," He told them (St. Mark x. 40), "but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared." In the version given by St. Matthew (xx. 23) the last sentence reads, "but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father." The acceptance by Jesus of His coming glory forms another strong link in the chain of evidence.

When they had passed through Jericho, a blind beggar named Bartimæus, who was sitting by the wayside, heard the noise of the multitude who were accompanying Jesus and the disciples. On being told that it was Jesus of Nazareth, the blind man, whom the fame of many wonderful miracles of healing had doubtless reached, began to cry out, with the object of drawing attention to his own pitiable condition, exclaiming loudly: "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him for making such a clamour; but he only cried out the louder, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus immediately halted, and gave the command: "Call ye him." The blind man's anxiety was at once ended by good-natured bystanders, who hastened to say to him: "Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee"; and full of faith in the power of Christ to put an end to his misery, he sprang up and came to where Jesus stood, guided, no doubt, by willing and sympathetic hands.

He must have felt the warmth and tenderness of

our Lord's smile, as Jesus asked him : " What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ? " Full of confidence was the blind man's answer : " Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." There was no need here, apparently, for any manipulation by the healing hands of Christ. He pronounced the simple words : " Go thy way ; thy faith hath made thee whole " ; and straightway the blind man's sight was restored to him. The incident is related in the three first Gospels, St. Matthew making mention of a second blind man who was cured at the same time ; and St. Luke adds that the man, on being healed, followed Jesus, glorifying God ; and that all the people who witnessed the miracle gave praise to God also.

The next important halting-place was Bethany. Jesus arrived there with the disciples six days before the Passover. Supper was prepared for Him at the house of Lazarus, who, it is recorded by St. John (xii. 2), was one of them who sat at meat with Him. It was on this occasion that Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with precious ointment, and that Judas Iscariot gave an indication of his real character by grumbling at the waste. The ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor, was his ostensible objection ; but St. John states that he said this " because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein." The comment made by our Lord contained another prophetic allusion to His approaching death, which nobody understood. " Suffer her to keep it against the day of my bury-

ing," He said. "For the poor ye have always with you ; but me ye have not always."

There is but little mention of Lazarus after his being raised from the dead. No word that he uttered since that event is recorded in St. John's Gospel. All the evidence required to prove the wonder of the miracle was the testimony of his continued existence. And in this place further light is thrown on that matter. St. John states that whilst Jesus was resting at the house of Lazarus, people came there not for Jesus' sake only, but out of curiosity to see Lazarus whom He had restored to life. And he adds the important piece of corroborative evidence that the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus to death also, because on his account many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.

Stronger testimony than this could hardly be required by the most exacting legal mind. It helps to establish the occurrence of a miracle, already amply testified to, so far beyond all human striving or achievement that the divine power by which alone it could have been wrought cannot be questioned.

## CHAPTER XVII

“ Father, glorify thy name ! ”

THE triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on the Sunday of the most fateful week in the world's history was preceded by an incident—trifling in comparison with the great works by which His public ministry had been accompanied—which serves, nevertheless, to show that everything He did was elevated far above the ordinary procedure of human life. When they were nearing their destination, Jesus sent on two of the disciples in advance, with the command : “ Go into the village that is over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her : loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any one shall say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them ; and straightway he will send them.” These words are quoted from the Gospel of St. Matthew (xxi. 2, 3), the versions given by St. Mark and St. Luke omitting the fact that the ass was to be brought as well as the colt. This omission on the part of two of the Evangelists is probably accidental ; and, if so, St. Matthew's account throws an interesting light on a subject not otherwise mentioned in the New Testament—namely, the humane treatment of animals by our Lord.

For the order given to the disciples, as recorded in this Gospel, suggests at once that Jesus, with a tender regard for these dumb beasts, was unwilling to separate the colt from its mother.

The point of the story is, however, the foreknowledge displayed by Jesus. For everything happened as He had predicted. The colt and the ass were found tied to a door in the open street ; and when, in answer to a question put by those who were standing by, the two disciples said : " The Lord hath need of him ; and straightway he will send him back hither," no objection was made, and they were allowed to take the animals away.

Then followed the triumphal procession into the city. Jesus rode upon the colt ; and He was preceded on the way by a great multitude of people, spreading branches and even their garments upon the road, and crying out : " Hosanna ; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord : Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David : Hosanna in the highest." Some of the Pharisees who were in the midst of this concourse, incensed at the implication of these joyful expressions, called upon Jesus to rebuke His disciples. His answer to their objections possesses a significance which it is impossible to overlook. " I tell you," He replied, " that if these should hold their peace, the stones will cry out." No more convincing proof of Christ's deity could be required than this declaration, coming from the lips of One whose humbleness of character has been a Chris-

tian ideal, impossible of attainment, for countless generations.

For Jesus Himself this royal entry had not the same joyous meaning. When the city came into view, its beauty crowned by the glorious building of the temple, the knowledge of what would befall it in the not far distant future overcame Him. As He wept over it, He uttered again a prophetic warning, amply fulfilled in the days of its destruction by the Roman legions, concerning its terrible destiny :

“ If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

When Jesus had entered the temple, and had indignantly cast out the vendors and money-changers who desecrated it, He set about healing the blind and the crippled who came to Him there. The chief priests and Scribes looked on at this work of mercy in helpless anger ; and when the children, taking up the cry of the multitude that had accompanied Him into the city, shouted : “ Hosanna to the Son of David ! ” they could contain themselves no longer. “ Hearest thou what these are saying ? ” they asked. And Jesus answered :

“Yea: did ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”

After spending the night at Bethany again, Jesus returned to Jerusalem on the following morning. It was on this occasion that an episode occurred which has puzzled many people. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark relate it in their Gospels. To take the account given by St. Matthew (xxi. 19-22), Jesus saw a fig tree by the wayside, and being hungry approached it to find that there was nothing on its branches but leaves. Upon discovering that the tree was barren, Jesus exclaimed: “Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward for ever.” Immediately the fig tree withered. This miracle astonished the disciples who witnessed it, and they hastened to question their Master on the subject. Jesus replied to them: “If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do what is done to the fig tree, but even if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

Those who wish to explain away this miracle can only do so because they think it sounds unworthy of our Lord. But, in the first place, it is quite obvious that the act was not committed in anger. It was done for a purpose—perhaps for that of showing the power of spirit over matter—which may be as much concealed from us as it probably was from the disciples. One does not expect to understand the divine intention in everything.

The suggestion, however, that it would have been an act of wanton destruction is simply absurd. Fig trees have no feelings ; and there would be no more cruelty or wantonness in destroying one by way of useful demonstration than in doing the same thing to an inanimate object such as a stone. We are not required to find an explanation for everything we do not understand. There are unexplainable mysteries in the Bible, as elsewhere. It is enough that our Lord, for a purpose of His own, performed a miraculous action attributable to divine power alone.

Accepting it simply as an illustration of the power of faith, it is also permissible to regard as partly humorous the answer given by Jesus to the disciples, when they asked why the fig tree had immediately withered away. In stating the further possibility of the disciples, by faith, casting the mountain into the sea, He intended to push a logical argument—or a theoretical truth—to its extreme. No human being, it is quite certain, however strong his belief, would possess the complete and absolute faith essential to affect matter in so stupendous a way. Of this Jesus was Himself of course aware ; but it did not contradict the truth of what He asserted about the unlimited power of faith. Who can doubt, reflecting upon the power He exercised over the elements, that Christ could have achieved even this miracle since He asserted it to be a possibility of spiritual law ? To explain the statement away by the assumption that our Lord intended the word “ mountain ”

to be symbolical of "difficulties" is hardly justified by the clearness of the phrase and its context.

It was reported to Jesus that some Greeks, who had travelled to Jerusalem in order to be present at the Passover, had expressed their desire to see Him. Upon hearing this, He exclaimed to the disciples: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will the Father honour." These words signify clearly enough the deity of Christ. They were followed by a supernatural event which is so circumstantially narrated by St. John the Evangelist, that it could not be disbelieved without discrediting the Gospel as a whole.

"Now is my soul troubled," Jesus continued; "and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name."

The answer to this prayer came at once. A voice, speaking from above, said:

"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

It is not asserted that everybody who was present distinguished these words. Jesus was, as usual, surrounded by a multitude of people; and the

mass of those who heard the voice declared that it had thundered. Others, perhaps more spiritually developed, said that an angel had spoken to Him. The admission of this fact helps, of course, to put the stamp of truth upon St. John's account. But conjecture or doubt on the subject is entirely removed by the words stated to have been uttered by Christ when the voice of God had spoken.

"This voice hath not come for my sake," He declared, "but for your sakes."

With this statement all doubt must vanish. Either God spoke; or St. John lied; or Jesus Christ deceived or hypnotized the people. It is better for those who wish to arrive at the truth to confront themselves with clear issues. The half-way of belief does not fit the Gospel narratives. One cannot pick and choose with the object of pampering mental prejudice. If any part is false, or deliberately misleading, the whole falls to the ground.

But the discourse had not ended with this momentous declaration. Jesus went on to speak prophetically of the near future. "Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." St. John adds that these words were intended to signify by what manner of death He should die. They disquieted the people, who asked: "We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?"

Again Jesus answered in words pointing to His equality with God : “ Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not : and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.”

## CHAPTER XVIII

“Coming with power and great glory.”

WHEN Jesus had left the temple, He walked with His disciples, probably in the cool of the evening, up the slopes of the Mount of Olives, and sat down. Already on the way He had warned them of the coming fate of the temple. “Seest thou these great buildings?” He said, addressing one of the disciples; “there shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.” This saying naturally troubled them; and when they were seated on the side of the mount, with the dazzling structure of the temple beneath them resplendent in the rays of the setting sun, they recurred to the subject. “Tell us,” they asked; “when shall these things be?”

The answer given by Jesus to this question clearly bore reference to two forthcoming events—the minor one typical of the much greater and more important one to follow—the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming of Christ. As recorded in the first three Gospels, the two subjects are so interwoven that it is not always easy to determine to which of them a particular prediction should be applied. The Evangelists had no idea, of course, that many centuries would roll by before the great hope of the Christian world was destined

to be realized. The disciples probably thought that the two events about which Jesus spoke to them would be close together in time, and that what was said concerning one might consequently apply to the other.

One has to bear this in mind in studying these prophetic utterances. It is as well to remember also that the awful fate of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans was preceded, as predicted by our Lord, by wars, earthquakes, and other horrors, and that the whole prophecy regarding the fate of the city and the destruction of the temple was fulfilled to the letter. The partial fulfilment of predictions which are plainly applicable to the last days before the judgment must also be taken into consideration.

The words which Jesus is recorded to have spoken during this momentous discourse vary, naturally enough, in the three Gospels; but the variations are supplementary and do not in any sense contradict one another. According to St. Luke (xxi. 8-28), Jesus replied :

“Take heed that ye be not led astray : for many shall come in my name, saying, I am he ; and, The time is at hand : go ye not after them. And when ye shall hear of wars and tumults, be not terrified : for these things must needs come to pass first ; but the end is not immediately.”

These words clearly apply to conditions that would precede the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jesus went on to say :

“Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom

against kingdom : and there shall be great earthquakes, and in divers places famines and pestilences ; and there shall be terrors and great signs from heaven."

It has been supposed that these calamities were to precede both of the predicted events. As already stated above, they occurred—though on a minor scale—before Jerusalem was destroyed and the scattering of the Jewish nation commenced ; and we have good reason in our own day to believe that Christ's words are again receiving their fulfilment, as will be shown more clearly in the latter part of His prophetic declaration.

The next part of our Lord's discourse referred to the near future. The accuracy with which details are foretold, and the tone of authority in which spiritual matters are referred to, are evidence of His divine power that cannot be explained away to suit the assumption that He was a man like ourselves. Even the superman of modern literary creation is not supposed to possess the secrets of the universe and to know the destinies of individuals and nations.

"But before all these things," He said, "they shall lay their hands on you, and shall persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for my name's sake. It shall turn unto you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer : for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to

gainsay. But ye shall be delivered up even by parents and brethren and kinsfolk and friends ; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. And not a hair of your head shall perish. In your patience ye shall win your souls.

“ But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. Then let them that are in Judæa flee unto the mountains ; and let them that are in the midst of her depart out ; and let not them that are in the country enter therein. For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days ! for there shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath unto this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

In reading these words of prophecy it must be borne in mind that the actual siege of Jerusalem was commenced by Titus, at the head of a large army, in A.D. 70. The best authorities date the publication of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke at between A.D. 60 and A.D. 70. To those, therefore, who attach importance to the fact that the prophetic utterances of Jesus Christ should have been recorded before their fulfilment, an ample margin of time is conceded. For the final

destruction of Jerusalem, although the city was reduced to ruins during the year in which the siege was begun, did not take place until two years later ; whilst the scattering of the Jewish race, commenced under Titus in A.D. 72, was continued throughout a period of fifty years before it was finally accomplished.

We have ample historical evidence, therefore, that Christ's prophecy concerning the fate of Jerusalem and the Jews was accurately fulfilled. The fact enables us, with the greater faith and assurance, to grasp the significance of that part of the prediction which clearly applies to events then in the far distant future. The question cannot be avoided : Are we living to-day in the times when our Lord's prophecy regarding the last days before the final judgment is receiving fulfilment ?

The last words of His discourse quoted above were : " Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." In December 1917, the Turks were driven out of Jerusalem by a British force under Lord Allenby, and the city passed into the permanent keeping of a Christian nation. It ceased, then, at that date in the progress of the Great War, to be trodden down of the Gentiles. The times of the Gentiles must, therefore, now be fulfilled. What then ?

" And there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars ; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows ; men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the

things which are coming on the world : for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."

We cannot pretend to understand everything. Our ignorance even of earthly things is not to be measured. The most scientifically trained experts in every department of human knowledge are, in their superior consciousness of this fact, the most humble-minded of men and women. It is not surprising that heavenly things should be, for the most part, beyond our grasp. We have no means of discerning, even by guess-work, what Jesus meant when He said : " There shall be signs in sun and moon and stars." It is impossible for us to tell, even, if His words are to be taken literally, or if He intended them to be symbolical of material happenings on this earth. But one would be blind indeed to fail to perceive that the sentences which follow this cryptic utterance describe, with complete accuracy, the conditions in which we have been living since the Great War shook the foundations of human society in 1914.

Are we then not to anticipate the near fulfilment of Christ's concluding prophecy ?—

" And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads ; because your redemption draweth nigh."

These words were accompanied by a solemn assurance and warning :

" Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and

hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. . . . Watch therefore : for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh " (St. Matt. xxiv. 35, 36).

The statement by Christ that He will come again in His visible presence is clear and unequivocal. No juggling with words and phrases, no search for inner meanings or suggestions of symbolism, can place a false construction upon this simple declaration, which is recorded in almost identical language by St. Matthew and St. Mark, and corroborated by the version given in the Gospel of St. Luke.

It was repeated afterwards with equal clearness, by two angels, to the disciples who witnessed the ascension of Jesus into heaven.

## CHAPTER XIX

“ One of you shall betray me.”

THOSE who doubt the claim of Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, invested with divine power, should read and reflect upon the account He gave to the disciples of the final judgment. It is illuminating from many points of view—not the least, that our Lord makes the love shown to our fellow-men the sole test of fitness for the kingdom of heaven. St. Matthew (xxv. 31-46) records His words as follows :

“ But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory : and before him shall be gathered all the nations : and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats : and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

“ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“ Then shall the righteous answer him, saying,

Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

“Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

“Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me.

“And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.”

The full import of this prophetic declaration—given in the form of a parable, as was Christ's wont when symbolizing a great truth—hardly needs pointing out. Jesus speaks plainly enough of His coming to judge the world, accompanied by the angels. It is a statement obviously intended

to be taken literally. If He had been an ordinary man, and not the Son of God invested with full power and authority, such words could never have issued from One who taught and practised humility on earth.

There followed another striking prediction of His approaching death, given by St. Matthew at the commencement of chapter xxvi. of his Gospel ; and it is noticeable that on this occasion Jesus not only foretold, once more, that He would be crucified, but also mentioned the actual time when His betrayal would take place. "Ye know," He said to the disciples, "that after two days the passover cometh, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified."

It may have been on this occasion, too, that Jesus spoke again to the disciples, as clearly as He ever spoke, of His divine mission. The words are recorded in chapter xii. (44-50) of the Gospel of St. John :

"He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that beholdeth me, beholdeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness. And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not : for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him : the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself ; but the Father which sent me, he hath given me a commandment,

what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal: the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak."

A remarkable instance of prevision occurred when Jesus, on the day preceding His betrayal, sent two of the disciples, Peter and John, to make preparations for the Passover feast. He said: "Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house whereinto he goeth. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready." Both St. Mark and St. Luke concur in giving these details, and they confirm that everything was found as Jesus had predicted.

Clairvoyance is, of course, an accepted fact in these scientific days. Many experiments have demonstrated what wonderful results can be achieved, in this direction, by means of hypnotism in the case of suitable subjects. But although the hypnotized person is capable of developing television, or travelling clairvoyance, precognition of the nature exercised by Jesus Christ on more than one occasion remains a unique and unprecedented phenomenon. It exalts the power manifested by our Lord as far above the achievements of human psychological experiment, as in the case of the miraculous cures He performed so lavishly.

In this room, in the house at Jerusalem, Jesus and the twelve apostles sat down for the last time to eat in common. The meal was interrupted by an act of profound significance. Jesus rose up from the supper, and, after making due preparation, proceeded to wash the disciples' feet, wiping them on the towel with which He had girded Himself. When it came to the turn of Simon Peter to have this humble office performed for him, he asked in protest : "Lord, dost thou wash my feet ?" Jesus answered gently : "What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt understand hereafter." And when Peter would have prevented Him, He said : "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Peter then exclaimed impetuously : "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." But Jesus, alluding to the presence amongst them of the treacherous spirit of Judas, replied : "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit : and ye are clean, but not all."

The lesson He sought to impress upon them was explained when they resumed their places at supper. "Know ye what I have done to you ?" He asked. "Ye call me, Master, and, Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you."

It would be impossible to conceive a scene more affecting than Christ kneeling down, in the midst of His disciples, and performing for them the most

lowly service in all human relationship. It might well be argued, from one's present-day knowledge of human nature, that such an act of humility could have no other than a divine origin. But if it may not of itself prove that Jesus was the Son of God, it cannot be omitted from an account of His actions that were stamped with divinity. The lesson is too deep to be overlooked, and fits in accurately—both by its unexpectedness on the part of those who had been led to anticipate an all-conquering and triumphant Messiah, and because of its spiritual insight into the chief defects of our human nature—with Christ's teaching that love and mutual service form the whole duty of mankind.

But from this unforgettable episode onwards the meal was overshadowed by tragedy. As they ate together, Jesus declared in sorrowful tones: "Verily, I say unto you, One of you shall betray me, even he that eateth with me." These words caused great distress to the disciples. "Is it I?" they asked anxiously, in turn. "It is one of the twelve," answered Jesus; "he that dippeth with me in the dish. For the Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had not been born."

These words prove two things: that Jesus could read the future, and that He could read the souls of men. Whatever pretensions are put forward in this same respect in modern times—generally a combination of truth and error with

an occasional admixture of guess-work—nothing like the prescience of our Lord and His insight into true character and motive has its parallel in the history of humanity. Whether it were one of the disciples with whom He was in daily intercourse, or a total stranger whom He beheld for one fleeting moment, Jesus displayed the same divine gift of penetration.

St. Matthew relates that Judas also inquired : “ Is it I, Rabbi ? ” and that Jesus answered him with those terribly accusing words : “ Thou hast said.”

Without recording this incident, St. John also refers to the episode of Judas. A touching picture is given by him of the intimacy he enjoyed as one of the most beloved of the disciples. Jesus and the twelve apostles did not sit at table, as suggested by the famous picture of Leonardo da Vinci, but reclined on couches after the manner customary both in Rome and in the Orient. And St. John was so placed that he enjoyed the wonderful privilege of pillowing his head upon the bosom of his Master. Simon Peter whispered to him to ask of whom Jesus had spoken ; and St. John, leaning back, said : “ Lord, who is it ? ” Jesus answered : “ He it is, for whom I shall dip the sop, and give it him.” He then dipped the sop, and gave it to Judas Iscariot. Judas must have received the sop with downcast eyes. He could not have dared to look up and meet the glance of his Lord, full of divine reproach and of divine pity. But his evil nature prevailed. Upon hearing

the command: "That thou doest, do quickly," Judas went out into the darkness of the night to commit a crime so awful that the hardest-hearted sinner, not wholly lost to all sense of decency and honour, might weep for the consequences to his wretched soul.

Although they were completely taken by surprise by the tragic events which followed later, the disciples cannot fail to have been deeply moved by the solemn significance of all that took place at the Last Supper. As they were eating, Jesus took bread and gave it to them, saying: "Take, eat; this is my body." Then, giving them a cup of wine, He spoke words—faithfully acted upon by the Christian Churches ever since—even more impressive and mystifying to them: "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the wine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Who, let it be asked, could speak of the remission of sins and give this solemn promise of a new covenant for this purpose sealed by blood, but God, or His Son? The alternative implies blasphemy, or insane megalomania. At this great moment of His life, when He was about to face the appalling fate which He deliberately courted, and which could not in mercy be hidden from His divine knowledge of the future, our Lord uttered words that bore a meaning which placed Him—as the divine Saviour of mankind—on an

equality with God Himself; and invited His chosen apostles to eat bread and drink wine as a holy sacrament to seal His compact between God and humanity. Those who believe that this solemn scene was enacted at the Last Supper, and that Christ spoke the words put into His mouth by three independent witnesses, one of whom was actually present and heard them with his own ears, and who yet maintain that our Lord was an ordinary man of superlative virtue, must deliberately blind themselves to the true meaning of this simple, but overwhelming, incident.

Every word uttered by Christ on this occasion was characterized by the spirit of prophecy; but St. John's full and unique account of His last discourse before the crucifixion must be reserved for another chapter. That He said many things which have been left unrecorded by the first three Evangelists, seems obvious enough; and the omission was repaired eventually by St. John, who is believed by many eminent authorities to have written his Gospel ten, or even twenty, years after the publication of the other three versions. It is simply stated in the Synoptic Gospels that after the incident of the bread and wine they sang a hymn, and then accompanied Jesus to the Mount of Olives.

## CHAPTER XX

“ I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”

IT is quite obvious that the incidents related in the foregoing chapter do not cover all the ground. Much must have been said by Jesus Christ, on such an occasion as the Last Supper, which was not recorded by the three Evangelists whose Gospels harmonize most closely. But it is also clear that none of them was so well qualified as St. John to write down a discourse, delivered by our Lord under such exceptional conditions, which dealt so entirely with spiritual things. One may regard it, indeed, as a high tribute to St. John's qualifications in this respect that he is credited, by some authorities, with having expanded the discourses reported by him by the incorporation of a good deal of himself and his own matured reflections.

There are others, of course, who think that St. John wrote under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That may well have been the case ; but there is no reason to suppose that complete accuracy of memory is an impossible feat, even after an interval of fifty or sixty years between the event and its recording. Psychological experiments have proved, beyond the possibility of doubt, that

some part of the subconscious mind retains a permanent memory of everything with which an individual has come in contact, even to the extent of noting words or objects which have escaped the observation of the conscious mind. It would not require either a miracle on the part of God, or the intervention of the Holy Spirit, to enable a writer like St. John, who enjoyed so lofty a spiritual development, to obtain access to matter stored by this subconscious memory. Such access has been obtained by means of hypnotism; and there is no reason to doubt that exceptionally gifted individuals have been enabled, either by Providence or by the operation of an unknown natural law, to draw unconsciously upon some hidden spiritual source.

Leaving these suggestions for the consideration of the individual reader, it may be confidently stated that there is not only no reason to suppose that St. John did not faithfully transcribe the actual words used by our Lord at the Last Supper and on other occasions, but that there is a choice of reasons against any such assumption. Least of all must we believe, as has already been urged in a former chapter, that St. John, or any other of the Gospel writers, was capable of putting into the mouth of Christ assertions implying His deity and consequent equality with God which He never made. In this light we must read St. John's report of our Lord's discourse to the apostles on the eve of His crucifixion. Those who wish to read it again in its entirety will find it in St. John's

Gospel, chapters xiv. to xvii. inclusive. The extracts given here are those which may be considered to bear, most directly, upon the question of deity.

"Let not your heart be troubled," Jesus declared: "ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know the way."

At this point Thomas interrupted with a question. "Lord, we know not whither thou goest," he objected; "how know we the way?"

The words in which Jesus replied to His disciple—treasured since they were spoken in the hearts of all who believe on Him—point so unmistakably to His deity that it is difficult to see what other conceivable construction could be placed upon them. Jesus spoke for all time. It was His divine mission to save not only the people of His own generation, but also the millions of souls still to be born into the world. His words were addressed to them as well as to His contemporaries. And if it was His purpose, on the eve of the great and terrible event which was to change the whole trend of men's thoughts to the end of time, to give a clear and unequivocal declaration of His relationship to God, it could not have been achieved with more convincing simplicity and directness.

It is just in statements of this character, also, that a man of sterling purity of heart and intention, like St. John, knowing with what desperate anxiety the whole Christian world would scrutinize and cling to every word uttered by Christ, would scrupulously confine himself to the most faithful report of what was actually said by his Master.

Answering Thomas, Jesus said : " I am the way, and the truth, and the life : no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also : from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him."

To us, who know all that that tragic period of the world's history has handed down to us of explanation and fulfilment, the implication of Christ's words must be clear enough. But the disciples were still in a very elementary stage of their development ; and Philip interjected a remark which showed how far he was from comprehension. " Lord, shew us the Father," he begged, " and it sufficeth us."

Jesus was always patient with His disciples, whom He was laboriously training to shoulder the greatest burden of spiritual work ever accorded to mankind ; but there may not unlikely have been a gentle note of reproach in His voice, when He replied :

" Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip ? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ; how sayest thou, Shew

us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. . . .”

Other statements made by Jesus during this intimate talk bear an equal significance.

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

The tone of authority is unmistakable in the words “whom I will send unto you from the Father.”

Again:

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you. . . .”

And when Jesus said to the apostles: “I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father,”

they exclaimed : " Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now know we that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee : by this we believe that thou camest forth from God."

But Jesus knew that their faith was about to be put to a test so severe that it would momentarily fail them. With this knowledge, He answered them sadly : " Do ye now believe ? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone : and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." The apostles must have listened to this prediction in profound sorrow. They knew that only the truth proceeded from their Master ; and none of them ventured to interrupt Him with futile assurances. And Jesus, knowing their necessity for words of comfort at this critical moment in their lives, added : " These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world." In giving this message of hope, our Lord may well have looked beyond the needs of His own disciples, and have intended His words of reassurance for the help and comfort of future generations.

Then Jesus uttered, in the form of a prayer for the special protection of His disciples, His last words before leaving the scene of this fateful gathering. If proof of the deity of Christ depended upon nothing else, this final utterance would estab-

lish it beyond all doubt. The suggestion that St. John dreamed it, or invented it, or twisted some phrases spoken by our Lord and expanded them into an imaginary petition to God, is unworthy of a moment's consideration. Let the words speak for themselves, sentence by sentence ; and let everybody ask himself honestly what other interpretation can be placed upon them than that Jesus was the Son of God, a divine Being incarnated upon this earth, conscious of the power and authority delegated to Him and of His equality with the Father.

Lifting up His eyes to heaven, Jesus said :

“ Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee : even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that whatsoever thou hast given him, to them he should give eternal life. And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ. I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do.

“ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world : thine they were, and thou gavest them to me ; and they have kept thy word. Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee : for the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them ; and they received them, and knew of a truth that I

came forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me ; for they are thine : and all things that are mine are thine, and thine are mine : and I am glorified in them.

“ And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are. While I was with them, I kept them in thy name which thou hast given me : and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition ; that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to thee ; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word ; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world . . . Sanctify them in the truth : thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

“ Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word ; that they may all be one ; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us : that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them ; that they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me,

that they may be perfected into one ; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me.

“ Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee ; and these knew that thou didst send me ; and I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known ; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them.”

Nearly every sentence in this prayer contains an implication—or assertion—of the relationship in which Jesus Christ stands to God. It is not a petition from a humble sinner to the Almighty Being who stands immeasurably above him, but a veritable communion between Father and Son. No other meaning can be given to phrases such as : “ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was ” ; “ and all things that are mine are thine, and thine are mine ” ; “ Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are ” ; and “ for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

Jesus had spoken His last discourse and uttered His last prayer in the presence of all the apostles, save the one who had already gone out to betray his Master. And pondering deeply over all that

they had heard, they followed Him out of the house in which they had celebrated the Passover for the last time in common, and passed through the streets of Jerusalem in the darkness of the night.

## CHAPTER XXI

“ My kingdom is not of this world.”

JESUS loved the tranquillity of the evening, and it was His custom to escape from the turmoil of the city and seek an hour or two of repose at a favourite spot on the Mount of Olives before He lay down to sleep. On this night also, leaving Jerusalem after partaking of the Last Supper with the apostles, He led the way to the Garden of Gethsemane. As they walked along, passing out from the close and narrow streets of the city into the pure atmosphere of the country, Jesus uttered a prediction to the eleven apostles who accompanied Him, which was not understood by them at the time, though it prepared their minds for the wonderful event that was to happen afterwards.

“ All ye shall be offended,” He declared ; “ for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad. Howbeit, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.”

On hearing these words, Peter protested : “ Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.”

And then Jesus told him gently, with the sadness of divine foreknowledge, that he was destined that

night to deny his Master. "Verily, I say unto thee, that thou to-day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice."

When they came to Gethsemane, after this melancholy disclosure, Jesus bade the disciples sit down whilst He went to pray. Taking with Him Peter and James and John, He found a spot secluded from the rest and halted there. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death," He declared to them: "abide ye here, and watch." Then He went a little apart from them, fell on the ground, and prayed.

We cannot tell with what forces—spiritual or physical—our Lord may have had to contend. A few words uttered by Him under the stress of His agony have been preserved for us by the first three Evangelists; but a veil is drawn for the most part over this spiritual struggle, which was too sacred and too intimate between the Son of God and the Father for repetition to mankind in general.

St. Luke, whose account was doubtlessly derived from Peter, says that Jesus prayed: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done"; and that an angel appeared from Heaven and strengthened Him. That our Lord passed through a crisis of intense agony in the Garden of Gethsemane must be accepted as true; for, although St. John, who was an eye-witness of the scene, says nothing about it, St. Luke's account continues: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and

his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground."

It has been a consolation to some to reflect that Jesus was suffering on this occasion from a momentary physical weakness at the thought of the dreadful torture which awaited Him on the Cross, and that He thus becomes more human through having yielded—even for the briefest space—to a natural feeling of fear. But would it not be a greater consolation to believe that Jesus was spared this agonizing experience; that He cast aside all personal fear, and faced with perfect fortitude the horrible fate in store for Him?

Apart from the fact that the appalling suffering to which human savagery afterwards subjected Him failed to wring a single cry from His lips, one must bear in mind that Jesus, throughout the whole of His recorded life, was never concerned about Himself. All His actions, all His thoughts, all His prayers, were directed towards the welfare of others. He knew—He and God alone—what mighty issues were involved in the tragic sequel to which the perversity and wickedness of humanity were hurrying the Jewish nation. An ordinary man's crucifixion might be forgiven, and even forgotten. But the Son of God could not be insulted and put to an ignominious death without drastic and exemplary punishment. The crime that was about to be committed would, Jesus knew, have consequences so fearful that the whole world would stand appalled at the retribu-

tion—just but severe—exacted from the Jewish nation.

The death of Jesus was predetermined. God knew, in His infinite wisdom, that nothing short of this terrible sacrifice would make a deep and lasting impression upon mankind in general. But Jesus, in the tenderness of His love for all humanity, may for one moment, as He kneeled down before His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane in the hour of His impending betrayal, have thought it possible for God yet to save the Jewish people from their appalling fate. And it would then have been solely His thought for others which prompted Him to cry out, in an agony of distress : “ Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me.” But all had already been considered by God. The hope died as soon as it had been formulated ; and Jesus added, bowing Himself to what He knew to be the inevitable : “ Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”

Meanwhile Judas, who was well acquainted with this favourite resting-place of his Master, was approaching the spot with a band of soldiers, armed with swords and staves, and bearing lanterns and torches to light the way. Awaking the three apostles, who slept, Jesus went forth to meet this multitude ; and when, in answer to His question : “ Whom seek ye ? ” they replied : “ Jesus of Nazareth,” He answered : “ I am he.”

Then a strange thing happened.

This cohort of armed men—seasoned Roman

legionaries, rough and brutal, but of exemplary courage—retreated backwards in wild panic, and fell to the ground. What could have accomplished this marvel but the deity of Him whom they had come to arrest? Soldiers with much less training and discipline than a Roman legionary do not flinch in the course of performing even a dangerous duty. But men who can look death fearlessly in the face, cannot look into the eyes of God; and these brutalized ruffians, who could mock at the agony of a fellow-being tortured to death on a cross, were overwhelmed when confronted by the calm gaze of Jesus Christ.

The disciples now thought it time to intervene. "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" they asked. And one of them, Simon Peter, impatient to act at once in his Master's defence, struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. St. Luke records another miracle, and states that Jesus touched the ear and healed it. But Jesus reproved His over-zealous disciple. "Put up again thy sword in its place," He remarked sternly (St. Matthew xxvi. 52): "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

Although our Lord scorned the employment of supernatural means to overcome His enemies, He openly declared that this source of help was at His disposal. Can one doubt the truth of it, or

question the explanation He gave to the combative disciple and repeated again when He said to those who had come to arrest Him : " Are ye come out as against a robber with swords and staves to seize me ? I sat daily in the temple teaching, and ye took me not. But all this is come to pass, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

Jesus now allowed Himself to be seized by them ; and all the disciples, as He had predicted a few hours before, fled away from Him and sought their own safety.

During that night, until dawn broke, Jesus underwent three successive trials at the hands of the Jews. He was brought at first by the soldiers before Annas, a former high priest and the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was then occupying that office. Here it was that He was struck by an underling, without provocation, for His answer to a question put by Annas.

It was not until He was subjected to the second inquisition by Caiaphas that momentous words were spoken by Jesus, which, sealing His own condemnation, have brought life and consolation to generations of believers. To the accusations made against Him, Jesus answered nothing. Then Caiaphas, exasperated to the verge of despair, threw down his final challenge.

" I adjure thee by the living God," he exclaimed, " that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

To this direct question Jesus would not refuse to

reply. And not only Caiaphas and his crafty and malicious colleagues, but the whole world of earnest seekers after truth, have listened in breathless suspense to His affirmative answer :

“Thou hast said.”

Jesus had acknowledged Himself to be the Christ, the Son of God—the promised Messiah of the Jewish nation. And this overwhelming statement was followed by another of equal significance.

“Nevertheless I say unto you,” Jesus continued, “Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

Is this declaration to the high priest to go for nothing? It was made deliberately. Throughout the ordeal of His various trials, Jesus maintained a serenity and calm unexampled in history. He had complete command over Himself. Even when struck the first brutal blow by the ex-high priest's ruffianly subordinate, He uttered His dignified protest with superhuman gentleness. Every word spoken by Him before these mock tribunals, therefore, must be regarded as having been uttered, with divine wisdom and forethought, to be a witness to posterity for the purpose of strengthening their faith and placing their belief in Him, as the Son of God, beyond the possibility of doubt. Nor can there be any mistake, in the light of His concluding sentence when replying to the high priest, in His intention to herald once more to the world the fact that He would come

again when the appointed times of the Gentiles had been brought to their fulfilment.

That the educated and learned Jews who heard this answer, as they stood in the presence of the Son of God, were proof against the truth, even when it came from divine lips, is only another example of the difficulty with which the hard intellectual crust of prejudice can be pierced. They had heard only what they wanted to hear; and the high priest, secretly delighted at the success of the trap he had laid, went through the farce of rending his garments in simulated grief.

"He hath spoken blasphemy," he cried to the Scribes and Pharisees who were eagerly watching the trend of events, hoping against hope for the chance that would yield them the blood of their victim. "What further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye?"

The words came, in answer to this appeal, which they had been longing to utter.

"He is worthy of death," they exclaimed.

And then began that dreadful scene when Jesus was handed over by His infamous accusers to suffer indignity and outrage at the hands of the brutalized Roman soldiery. He, who afterwards prayed on the Cross for the forgiveness of His enemies, was struck and spat upon and blindfolded, whilst some of His tormentors amused themselves by asking: "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ: who is he that struck thee?"

Meanwhile the prediction of Jesus to Peter,

which had caused the latter so much heart-burning, had come true. In the courtyard of the high priest's palace Peter uttered his threefold denial ; and whilst he was repudiating all knowledge of his Lord for the last time, the cock crew. Instantly the gentle reproach spoken by Jesus came to his mind ; and at the same moment the Lord Himself was driven past by His persecutors on the way from the trial before Caiaphas to the guard-room. St. Luke states simply that "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" ; and in an anguish of mind impossible to conceive, he went out, and wept bitterly.

At daybreak the third trial was held by a more legally-constituted tribunal. Again the Jewish elders sought to obtain from Jesus another confession of His deity. "If thou art the Christ," they said, "tell us."

Jesus answered : "If I tell you, ye will not believe : and if I ask you, ye will not answer. But from henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

But the Jews wanted to have it more plainly still. "Art thou then the Son of God ?" they asked.

Again came from Jesus, in the Hebrew affirmative, the reply confirming the fact of His deity :

"Ye say that I am."

This was exactly the testimony the Jews wished to have repeated before the assembled Sanhedrin. "What further need have we of witness ?" they declared ; "for we ourselves have heard from his own mouth."

Having obtained the evidence necessary for the condemnation of Jesus, they took Him before Pilate, in order that they might procure the necessary Roman sanction for putting Him to death by crucifixion.

When Pilate asked Jesus if He were the King of the Jews, He replied :

“ My kingdom is not of this world : if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews ; but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

Helpless against the clamour of the Jews, Pilate handed Jesus over to the soldiers to be scourged. They plaited a crown of thorns, and placed it on His head, and mockingly dressed Him in royal purple. Then they struck Him with their infamous hands, exclaiming in derision : “ Hail, King of the Jews ! ”

Even Pilate, the hard-hearted Roman governor who had callously organized a treacherous massacre of unarmed Jews, was unable to look upon this spectacle unmoved. He hoped, apparently, to arouse some echo of this sentiment in the breasts of the Jewish elders ; for he led Jesus before them again in this pitiable condition, His face stained with blood and covered with the marks of the brutality to which He had been subjected, and pointing to their victim, exclaimed : “ Behold the man ! ”

But the Jews, worked up to a frenzy of hatred at a sight which might have evoked pity in the heart of an ignorant savage, only shouted in blind fury : “ Crucify him, crucify him ! ”

“Take him yourselves, and crucify him,” Pilate cried back at them, vainly trying to shift the blame from his own shoulders, “for I find no crime in him.”

The Jews knew that the Roman governor had contempt for their religion, but was bound nevertheless to respect its traditions. “We have a law,” they told him, “and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”

St. John tells us that when Pilate heard this saying, he was the more afraid. Already he had been made uneasy by the message from his wife about a warning dream; and now an awful suspicion began to take hold of him that Jesus, by whose presence he had been strangely awed, was of a higher and nobler order than himself or any of those who were thirsting to destroy Him.

Taking Jesus into a private room, he asked Him with evident anxiety: “Whence art thou?” And when Jesus remained silent, he added: “Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee?”

The reply of our Lord again filled Pilate with misgiving.

“Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin.”

Upon this, says St. John, Pilate sought to release Him. But the Jews would not be baulked of their victim. With the cunning of their race, they soon found an argument that would prevail with a man

like Pilate, who valued his own safety far above any other consideration. "If thou release this man," they threatened, "thou art not Cæsar's friend: every one that maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar."

And thus they obtained their way; and Jesus was delivered into their barbarous hands, to suffer the most shameful and cruel death that human wickedness has ever devised.

## CHAPTER XXII

“ Father, forgive them.”

JESUS, now dressed in His own garments, was compelled to bear upon His shoulders the Cross on which He was to be crucified. When the sad procession had passed through the streets of Jerusalem and had reached the city gate, He apparently sank down, unable to carry the great weight any longer ; for it is stated that the soldiers compelled a man named Simon of Cyrene, who was entering the city from the country, to carry it for Him.

They were followed by a great concourse of people, amongst whom were many women, who wept and lamented as they ran beside One who had loved the poor and showered blessings upon them. Jesus, turning to them, uttered His last solemn prophecy about the destruction of the city.

“ Daughters of Jerusalem,” He said, “ weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us ; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these

things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry ? ”

The next words He spoke were words of forgiveness when they nailed Him to the Cross.

It was the custom to give all malefactors, who were about to undergo the dreadful torture of crucifixion, an opiate to dull their sufferings. This boon was offered to Jesus, apparently before they drove the nails into His hands and feet. But when He had tasted it, and perceived what it was, He refused to drink. Not an atom of the pain would He allow to be mitigated in the terrible death He was about to face for the salvation of mankind.

And then, amidst the agony of the cruel blows by which He was fastened to the Cross, He uttered a prayer for the fiends who were executing this devilish work, which, for the beauty of its conception and the love displayed even towards the most callous and degraded brutes in the guise of men, remains the supreme example of a forgiving spirit, unattainable by the best of human beings.

“ Father, forgive them,” He prayed ; “ for they know not what they do.”

If God, in answer to that prayer, spared the ignorant tools who took an active part in this atrocious crime, He exacted, in the destruction of Jerusalem forty years later and the dispersal of the Jewish nation all over the world, a terrible vengeance from those who were responsible for the rejection and putting to death of the promised

Messiah, or had basely stood aside and abandoned Him to His enemies. That this vengeance was taken by Almighty God, and that Jesus knew of it long beforehand and wept over it as He prophesied the dreadful fate that would overtake Jerusalem, plainly demonstrates the source of His knowledge and offers another and convincing proof of His divine origin.

It was not long before one of the two thieves, between whom Jesus hung upon the Cross, recognized in whose presence his last hours of torment were being spent. The other malefactor had joined in the general taunting of the suffering Christ, and had said to Him: "Art thou the Christ? save thyself and us." But this one, wretched and degraded as he was, had still left in him a spark of goodness which was capable of responding to the divine purity and influence which must always have radiated from the personality of our Lord. Though he, also, hung upon his cross in a physical agony that the mind shudders to attempt to conceive, he contrived, nevertheless, to summon up sufficient strength to rebuke his brutal colleague and to testify to the conviction which had slowly dawned within his untutored brain.

"Dost thou not even fear God," he cried, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss."

It is probable, from these words, that this male-

factor was well aware of the miracles of healing performed by Jesus, and had recognized Him as the friend of the poor and suffering. Having uttered these words of rebuke, he made a humble and pathetic appeal to the Saviour.

"Jesus," he said, "remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

The reply of our Lord to this poor sinner will never be forgotten: "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Who but Christ, the Son of God, would have had the presumption, in that hour of suffering and death, to make such a promise?

When Jesus spoke again, it was to make provision for the future of His mother. A group of women were standing by the Cross, in what terrible anguish of mind only a mother, perhaps, could imagine. They consisted of Mary, the mother of Jesus, her sister, and Mary Magdalene; and with them, supporting them in their grief, was St. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

To His mother, Jesus said: "Woman, behold thy son"; and then, turning His tortured eyes in the direction of the disciple, He added the simple command: "Behold thy mother!"

And now the time had come when God intervened to show mankind that the greatest infamy in the world's history could not be perpetrated without some sign of anger from heaven. A great darkness suddenly descended upon the whole land, lasting from the sixth to the ninth hour.

Out of this darkness came the voice of Jesus from the Cross four times.

The first time, He uttered the cry which must always remain something of a mystery. It rings still in our ears as a cry of terrible despair :

“ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ”

If these had been Christ's own words, it might be suggested that they formed a natural enough cry, wrung from One whose agony had reached the limit of physical endurance, from the Son of God to His Father. But they form the opening sentence of the 22nd Psalm, which, on account of its prophetic allusions to His own life and death, must have been more familiar to Jesus than any other.

Verses 15 to 19 of this psalm refer plainly to the death upon the Cross :

“ My strength is dried up like a potsherd ;  
And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws ;  
And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.  
For dogs have compassed me :  
The assembly of evil-doers have inclosed me ;  
They pierced my hands and my feet.  
I may tell all my bones ;  
They look and stare upon me :  
They part my garments among them,  
And upon my vesture do they cast lots.  
But be not thou far off, O Lord :  
O thou my succour, haste thee to help me.”

It seems possible that Jesus, half delirious with pain, fastened His wandering mind upon this favourite psalm ; but that He was too exhausted,

after repeating the first line, to go on. There may be another and better explanation. If everything were clear to us, how easy it would be to shape our minds to the truth ! But the last explanation to accept, and the one to be repudiated as contrary to all other evidence, is that Jesus realized at last, as He suffered upon the Cross, that His belief in Himself was a delusion and that God had deserted Him.

What followed is, indeed, proof to the contrary. Directly after this cry, Jesus was heard to say : " I thirst " ; and when vinegar had been administered to Him, He bowed His head, and said : " It is finished." A cry came from the Cross at the moment when the divine spirit of Christ left His tortured body, and St. Luke states that it was followed by the words : " Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

These words, pronounced at the moment of death, would completely dispose of any suggestion that Jesus had regarded Himself, at the last, as deserted by God.

And now that the end had come, and the Saviour of mankind had been done to death, a convulsion of nature occurred, which, in its precise coincidence with the yielding up of Christ's spirit, was clearly intended to be a sign from heaven. The darkness culminated, at that awful moment, in an earthquake. " The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom," records St. Matthew ; " and the earth did quake ; and the rocks were rent ; and the tombs were opened ; and many

bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; and coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many."

The Roman centurion cannot have been the only person who, witnessing these events, exclaimed :

" Truly this man was the Son of God."

## CHAPTER XXIII

“ I am with you alway.”

NO warning from heaven could strike through to the hardened hearts of the chief priests and Pharisees. Mindful of Christ's prophecy that He would rise again the third day, they went to Pilate on the day after the crucifixion to request that the sepulchre in which His body had been laid should be guarded. Otherwise, they urged, the disciples might come and steal the body, and then tell the people that Jesus had risen from the dead. Pilate at once granted their request ; and, accompanied by a guard of soldiers, they made the sepulchre secure and put a seal upon the stone which was set at its entrance.

As soon as the day following the Jewish Sabbath began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and two or three other women went to the sepulchre to anoint the body of Jesus with spices. They found, to their astonishment, that the tomb was open and that the stone had been rolled away. Entering in, they saw a young man, arrayed in a white robe, sitting on the right side of the sepulchre. St. Matthew explains the event by stating that an angel of the Lord had descended from heaven and rolled away the stone ; and that his appearance had so terrified the guards that they had become

as dead men. There is some discrepancy in the accounts given by the first three Gospel writers of this incident, as St. Luke mentions not one but two angels. All concur, however, in stating that an angel spoke to the affrighted women, St. Matthew recording his words as follows :

“ Fear ye not : for I know that ye seek Jesus, which hath been crucified. He is not here ; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples, He is risen from the dead ; and lo, he goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him : lo, I have told you.”

After the resurrection Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. St. Mark states the fact (xvi. 9) ; but St. John (xx. 11-18) gives a full account of what took place. On finding the sepulchre empty, Mary Magdalene had run quickly to inform Simon Peter and St. John, and brought them back with her to verify her statement. When they had both entered the sepulchre and seen for themselves that Jesus was not there, the two disciples went away, leaving Mary standing outside the tomb, weeping. Still giving expression to her passionate grief, she presently stooped and looked into the tomb ; and there she saw two angels sitting in the place where the body of Jesus had lain.

They asked her : “ Woman, why weepest thou ? ” And she replied : “ Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” She turned away as she uttered these grief-stricken words ; and there, standing beside

her, was a figure that she did not immediately recognize.

A gentle voice addressed her. "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?"

It may be that Mary's eyes were too blinded with tears to recognize any one; or it may be that the appearance of our Lord was changed after death, so that He was not easily identified. St. John records, at any rate, that Mary, supposing Jesus to be the gardener, made to Him the pathetic appeal: "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

But Jesus only had to utter the word "Mary," in the familiar tones, for her sorrow to be turned into joyful recognition.

"Master!" she cried, realizing now who it was that addressed her. And she would have thrown herself down and clasped His feet, in the ecstasy of her delight, had Jesus not restrained her by saying:

"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God."

The mysterious command given by Mary not to touch Jesus at that moment may, from the nature of the context, have been spoken by Him in conformity with a psychic law of which we have no knowledge, although science is beginning to grope its way dimly along this new avenue of exploration. As St. John offers no explanation of the

words, and contents himself merely with recording them, one may suppose that he was as ignorant as we are on the subject. If such be the case, their inclusion in the narrative furnishes additional evidence of the intrinsic value of the story, which is mentioned as well, though without details, in the Gospel of St. Mark.

Jesus also appeared to the other women who had accompanied Mary Magdalene, at early dawn, to the sepulchre. St. Matthew is the sole authority in this case. He states that Jesus met them running to bring the news of the empty tomb to the disciples, and, greeting them with the words : "All hail!" gave them the following message to deliver : "Go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me."

The third appearance of Jesus on the day of His resurrection was to Simon Peter. Nothing has been recorded of it except the bare fact ; but St. Luke and St. Paul, both of whom were intimately acquainted with the apostle, vouch for its occurrence."

A remarkable experience was accorded on the same day to two disciples as they walked along on the road to Emmaus, a village about eight miles distant from Jerusalem. They were discussing together the terrible events which had just happened, when a stranger joined them and asked what they were talking about. Finding Him apparently ignorant of what had been going on, the disciples told the supposed stranger the

whole story. They expressed their disappointment at the fate which had befallen Jesus, stating that they had hoped that it was He who was destined to redeem Israel. And they told the story of the empty sepulchre, and of the assertions about a vision of angels having been seen.

After listening to their account, the stranger exclaimed : " Oh foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken ! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory ? " Having said this, Jesus, still unrecognized by them, proceeded to interpret to them, as they walked together, the prophecies concerning Himself which were contained in the Scriptures, and were, of course, familiar to every religiously instructed Jew.

When they reached Emmaus the two disciples begged their companion to rest there with them ; but it was not until they sat down to their evening meal, and Jesus took the bread, and blessed it, and divided it amongst them, that recognition suddenly came to them. And then, says St. Luke, " he vanished out of their sight."

None of these stories about Christ's appearances after His death was believed by those to whom they were related at the time. In cases where a spirit is said to have been seen by one individual, there is a natural doubt as to its not having been a mere hallucination of the brain. But even when two or three persons declared that they had collectively seen Jesus on this day, and had

actually been spoken to by Him, the rest of the disciples remained absolutely sceptical.

The fifth appearance of our Lord, however, set all doubts at rest. It took place in dramatic circumstances. When the two disciples returned to Jerusalem from Emmaus they found ten of the apostles assembled together, eagerly discussing the appearance which St. Peter declared to have been vouchsafed to him. The earnestness of St. Peter in asserting that Jesus had appeared to him seems to have impressed them, and even to have compelled their belief. But St. Mark tells us that they refused to believe the story told by the two disciples.

And then, as if to corroborate their evidence, Jesus suddenly appeared standing in the midst of them. In spite of His reassuring words: "Peace be unto you," St. Luke states that they were all terrified, believing that they saw a spirit.

But Jesus quickly calmed them.

"Why are ye troubled?" He asked; "and wherefore do reasonings arise in your heart? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having."

If this gathering of our Lord's disciples were not actually sceptical, it is clear from St. Luke's account that they behaved with caution and reserve; although it is put in such a way as to suggest that they only hesitated to believe because they thought it too good to be true. Perceiving

this, Jesus determined to give them one more convincing proof of the solidity of His body. He asked : " Have ye here anything to eat ? " And when they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, He took it and ate it in front of them.

The evidence concerning this appearance of Christ is too strong to be disbelieved. No fewer than twelve persons were present on the occasion ; and the full account contained in St. Luke's Gospel could not have been published, unless it were strictly true, without receiving a public contradiction of which echoes would certainly have come down to us through more than one channel. It may also be pointed out that the circumstances of Christ's appearance in this case differ widely from those which, according to a considerable body of reliable evidence, invariably distinguish other spirit manifestations ; in the same way that His miraculous cures differentiate themselves from authenticated instances of faith healing. As before stated, we know very little—almost nothing—about the laws governing the spiritual universe. But we know enough to be certain that no talk about ectoplasm and materialization can account for the fact that Jesus, after His resurrection from the dead, looked, spoke, and acted like any ordinary person endowed with a physical body ; and that there is no other instance—in all the verified tales which have been collected from every quarter of the globe—of any departed spirit having returned to earth in such a manner and provided with so complete a command over physical matter.

Thomas, who was absent on this occasion, refused to believe till he had seen for himself. And eight days later, Jesus, suddenly standing in their midst in spite of closed doors, said to him : " Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and see my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and put it in my side : and be not faithless, but believing." Convinced at last, Thomas exclaimed : " My Lord and my God ! " (St. John xx. 27).

But Jesus, gently reproaching him for his incredulity, spoke those memorable words :

" Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Four times more the risen Christ showed Himself to His disciples before He was taken up into heaven in their presence. And on each occasion the numbers who were present—never less than seven—provide an ample guarantee that there was no room for hallucination.

Seven of the apostles were fishing in the Sea of Galilee when Jesus appeared standing on the shore. At first He was not recognized ; but when He directed them what to do and procured for them a great haul of fishes, they saw who it was. Peter jumped into the sea and swam ashore ; whilst the others followed. The fact mentioned by St. John that the disciples knew it was the Lord, but dared not ask if it were He, shows that there was something in Christ's appearance that was new to them and unusual. It is stated that Jesus distributed the bread and fish to them at breakfast

on the shore, but St. John does not say whether He Himself partook of any food on this occasion. Here it was that He asked St. Peter three times the question: "Lovest thou me?" and afterwards uttered some prophetic words signifying that St. Peter would die a martyr's death.

The next occasion was a very important one. Jesus had commanded the eleven apostles to go to a certain mountain in Galilee, and there to await Him. In addition to the eleven, five hundred disciples of Jesus assembled together and were also present. Writing of the occurrence many years later, St. Paul mentions the fact that many of these witnesses were still living. There is ample testimony, therefore, to the appearance of our Lord on this particular occasion. It was here that the words were spoken by Jesus, with which St. Matthew ends his Gospel:

"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Our Lord's ninth appearance is only important to us in the sense that every additional witness adds value to the general testimony. Our knowledge that it took place is derived solely from an allusion to it by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 7), who states: "He appeared to James, then to all the apostles."

In the same place St. Paul mentions his own tremendous experience, which cannot be overlooked by those who wish to examine the evidence for Christ's deity, and to which he alludes by the declaration : " And last of all, as one born out of due time, he appeared to me also."

The intensely dramatic scene may be recalled in a few sentences. Saul, as he was then called, was on his way to Damascus to hunt down some fugitive Gospel-preachers, of whom he was the avowed and fiercest persecutor. When within sight of the city gates, a blinding light suddenly streamed down on him from above ; and falling prostrate on the ground, he heard a voice saying to him : " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? "

" Who art thou, Lord ? " cried Saul, as he lay there.

The voice answered : " I am Jesus whom thou persecutest : but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

This was no subjective vision, as some have chosen to call it. The voice was heard by all who were accompanying Saul on his journey ; and the dazzling beam of light proved to be no illusion, for when Saul got up and opened his eyes he was found to have been struck blind. But better evidence of the reality of the experience than the hearing of the voice by all, and Saul's blindness, is the fact that the bitterest enemy of Christ's followers was in that moment converted into one of the noblest and most devoted of His servants on earth.

Nor can the changed attitude of the disciples after the crucifixion be ignored as positive and convincing evidence of the truth of the Gospel story. When Jesus was arrested and brought to trial, the disciples deserted Him and ran away. Their hopes and beliefs were shattered ; their faith was annihilated. Yet within a few days they were changed men. These terrified and disillusioned followers of Jesus suddenly became the joyful and fearless champions of a new faith, ready and anxious to face death itself for His sake.

What had worked this miraculous transformation ?

There is only one possible answer to this question. The resurrection of Christ had overwhelmed them as a proved fact. It was no longer a prediction, but dimly grasped and entirely misunderstood ; it was a reality that dispersed in one moment their spiritual blindness, and filled their understanding with a flood of light. No evidence could have been furnished so convincingly in support of the actuality of Christ's resurrection as this instantaneous revolution in the attitude and character of His chosen disciples.

It is circumstantial evidence of the strongest kind. The fact that the change affected not one individual but a whole group of persons, transforming irresolute and doubting men into a solid phalanx of believers and willing martyrs, makes it as much a proof of the resurrection and deity of Christ as anything contained in the four Gospels.

The ten well-attested appearances of our Lord, from the third day after the crucifixion to the date of His ascension forty days later, amply prove the fact of His resurrection. The appearance of the spirit of one known to have died is not, in itself, any proof of deity; though, in the case of Jesus Christ, the exceptional circumstances of the appearances and the words uttered by Him amply testify to the truth of His claim to be the Son of God.

Christ's deity is proved by His works, which are God's witness to it, and by His declarations on the subject, which are His own witness to it. There is no evidence, in all that He said and did during His life upon earth, which is not strictly corroborative of this fact. It could even be argued, from a purely literary standpoint, that if the four Gospels had been dug out of the ruins of some buried city in the East, without a single clue to the identity of their writers or even to their origin, their contents—passing the imagination and inventiveness of man—would yet bear upon them the convincing stamp of truth.

The exercise of the critical or judicial faculty is only one road by which one can reach belief in the deity of Christ. Those are fortunate indeed who can reach it by faith alone. But there are others whose inquiring minds cannot accept even great and obvious truths without personal investigation. If they will examine, free from prejudice, all the evidence provided in such rich abundance by the books of the New Testament,

willing to accept the testimony of witnesses who are entitled to belief, they can hardly come to any other conclusion than that proofs exist in abundance, which a Court of Justice would not hesitate to accept as final and convincing.

In view of the clear statement made by Jesus about His second coming, it must not be forgotten that when, at His last appearance to the disciples, He was carried up into the clouds in the act of blessing them, two angels made the following solemn declaration :

“ This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.”

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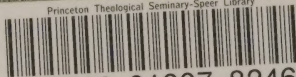
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